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By the dawn of 1945, the Western Allies had driven back Hitler's last, desperate effort in the Ardennes. However, the Allies' insistence on Germany's unconditional surrender deterred the Germans from making any concession over ending the war - Hitler and the Nazi faithful saw their only option to be a fanatical Wagnerian stand leaving only Germany's ruins to commemorate the tragedy. Further, it was already clear that another kind of war was right around the corner. The Soviets had already reached Budapest and the Oder River; it was obvious who would dominate Eastern Europe. The only hope for America and Britain to retain what they could of Central Europe was to take Berlin, but the 'Russian steamroller' forestalled them. Massive Soviet forces attacked the city

in April 1945 - the last act of the confrontation between the Communists and the National Socialists and the first act of the Cold War. Illustrated with color and b/w photographs, color maps, 8 aircraft and 9 armor profiles, and 14 color uniform plates; Stavropoulos, Vourliotis, Terniotis, Kotoulas, Valmas, and Zouridis. Great Battles of the World; 128 pages.

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# Readers' Letters

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## Goodbye paper, hello digital!

This is the last paper issue of Military Illustrated. After 25 years of regularly appearing in print, MI will now no longer be available in newsagents, but you can still buy it online. It has been a great honour and pleasure to edit MI for 205 of those issues and I look forward to this new digital chapter in the magazine's history.

Publishing is changing rapidly and MI is seeking to keep up with the revolution in reading. I appreciate that some of our readers may not be able to access this format, but I hope many others will. Our digital magazine will look exactly like the print edition, but is presented on your computer screen instead—and you will be able to print out your favourite articles.

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I wish to thank all our readers and contributors for their loyalty and support over the last quarter of a century, and hope their enthusiasm for MI will continue into this new digital age. Special thanks as always to MI's founder, Martin Windrow, previous stalwart proprietor, Fred Newman, and present owner Alan Harman

*Tim Newark, Editor, MI*

## Rommel's greatness in defeat?

I'd like to comment on the examination of Rommel (MI/273). If there is a great German general to emerge during the Second World War, Erwin Rommel is the only one. It is not an overt resistance to Nazism that makes him great because his legacy in this respect is ambiguous. Nor is it his combat record, per se, one that stretched from Poland, to France, to most famously North Africa, and finally to his defense of France in 1944. Despite this service, he was correctly critiqued by other German generals during the war for having never commanded more than a division. While an overstatement, the rebuke partly hit the mark. Also, the adulation heaped upon him by his enemies—that he waged a civilized war—is diminished by his location in the desert: few civilians were present to be

impacted by his operations. Finally, he was not militarily successful in both a narrow and broad viewpoint. He lost his war in the desert, and Germany met a crushing defeat in the war.

But failure was the measure of his greatness. Like Lee, his defeats represent the best of German militarism, how the war might have been fought, but it never suggests different results. Germany still lost the war. World War Two represented a great struggle, and Rommel allowed Germany to share a portion of this greatness by serving as a rebuke of Nazism in his person and exploits. Even he would have breathed a sigh of relief in having lived up to this understanding of greatness, and done so as he retreated from the desert a final time.



Cover: US 90th Infantry Division pose with swastika trophy alongside a Panther, 1944.

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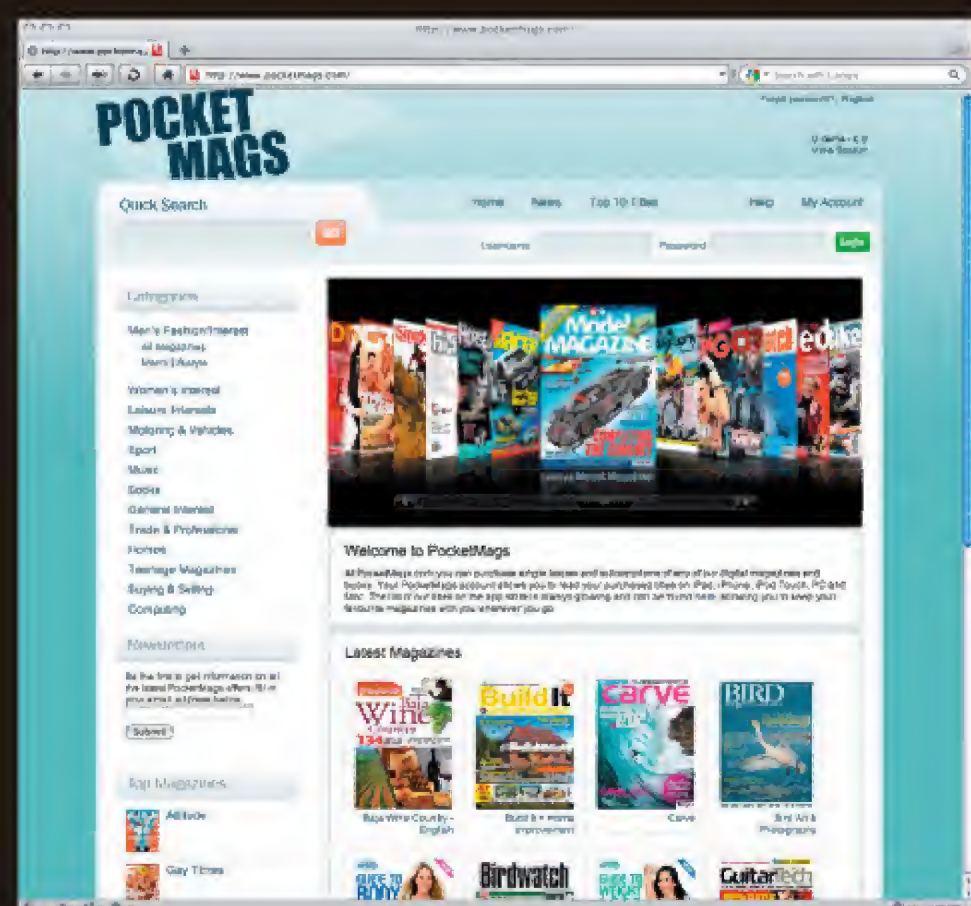
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# HUNTING HITLER'S PANZERS

The Nazi leader rushed his most powerful armoured division to crush the D-Day invaders, but as ANTHONY TUCKER-JONES reveals, it was relentlessly hunted down by Allied fighter-bombers.





men. Including those forces of the attached Panzer Company 316 (Funklenk – or radio controlled), Panzer Lehr had amassed an impressive 237 panzers and assault guns, consisting of 99 Panzer IVs, 89 Panthers, 31 Jagdpanzer IVs, ten Sturmgeschütz IIIs, and eight Tigers. This made it Hitler's fist in Normandy, which was capable of delivering a decisive knock out blow to any Allied unit that came up against it.

### **Strafed personally**

Bayerlein was Bavarian by birth, hailing from Würzburg, and like so many of his comrades had served in the trenches during the First World War. By 1944, he was a veteran panzer commander. During the invasions of Poland and France, he had served as General Heinz Guderian's First General Staff Officer. He fought with Erwin Rommel and that other leading panzer exponent Wilhelm von Thoma in North Africa. After several close scrapes with Rommel, he was lucky to escape Hitler's defeat in Tunisia, being sent back to Italy just before the Axis surrender on 12 May 1943. He was then posted to Russia to take charge of the 3rd Panzer Division.

Panzer Lehr was formed at Potsdam in November 1943 from demonstration units of the various Panzer schools and placed under the leadership of Major General Bayerlein. The division was transferred to France in February 1944 and on to Hungary in April of that year. It then returned to France for garrison duties.

Following the D-Day landings on the Normandy coast, Bayerlein recalled the almost instant bombing of his division: 'We moved as ordered, and immediately came under air attack. I lost 20 to 30 vehicles by nightfall. It's hard to remember exactly the figures for each day, but I do remember very well being strafed personally near Alençon. We kept on during the night with but three hours' delay for rest and refuelling. At daylight, General Dollmann [commander 7th Army] gave me a direct order to proceed and there was nothing else to do. ...

'I was driving in front of the middle column with two staff cars and two headquarters signal vans along the Alençon-Argentan-Falaise road. We had only got to Beaumont-sur-Sarthe when the first fighter-bomber attack forced us to take cover. For once we were lucky. But the columns were getting farther apart all the time. Since Army had ordered radio silence we had to maintain contact by dispatch riders. As if radio silence could have stopped the fighter-bombers and reconnaissance planes from spotting us! All it did was prevent the division staff

from forming a picture of the state of the advance – if it was moving smoothly or whether there were hold ups and losses, and how far the spearheads had got. I was forever sending officers or else seeking out my units myself.'

Fate partly favoured the Allies when it was decided to ship the Panthers of Bayerlein's 1st Battalion Panzer Regiment 6, which was on loan from the 3rd Panzer Division, to the Eastern Front. The day before D-Day, the first train bearing this unit reached Magdeburg in Germany, whilst the last was loitering in Paris. Once the Allied landings were underway, the battalion was ordered to laboriously retrace its steps.

Again fortunately for the Allies the half dozen powerful Tiger IIs of Panzer Company 316 were defective prototypes that were due back in Germany. Because they could not be moved by rail they were left at Chateaudun and eventually blown up. The unit was attached to Panzer Lehr for tactical purposes with about ten tanks, though by early July all but two were undergoing repair. It operated closely with the division's Panzer Lehr Regiment, starting with an operational strength of nine StuG assault guns and three Tiger Is. The divisional Panzer Artillery Regiment 130 also included Hummel and Wespe self-propelled guns adding to its armoured fighting vehicle contingent. In addition all the panzergrenadier units were equipped with armoured half-tracks and an array of heavy support weapons.

Colonel Helmut Ritgen, like his chief, experienced firsthand the division's difficulties trying to reach the enemy: 'Marching at night turned out to be reasonably safe and Panzer Lehr made their way to the Flers-Vire area on previously reconnoitred routes. My battalion was attacked by aircraft during a supply halt near Alençon. Bomb and gun bursts set tanks and POL [Petrol, Oil and Lubricant] trucks on fire, soldiers were killed and wounded. Similar incidents happened to all the columns. Some mushroom clouds of smoke were guiding the fighter-bombers to their targets. In spite of increased vehicle distance and dispersion to small groups, marching in daylight under repeated air attack was a risky venture, costing time and losses.'

The pilots of the Allied fighter-bombers attempted to wreak havoc on the division, though there is some dispute as to the exact numbers, losses of over 200 armoured fighting and wheeled vehicles were reported. While Bayerlein's columns struggled toward their objectives under rolling air attack, Bayerlein himself was severely cut up when

**T**he first air attack came about 0530 that morning, near Falaise,' reported Panzer Lehr's commander Fritz Bayerlein. 'By noon it was terrible: my men were calling the main road from Vire to Beny-Bocage a fighter-bomber race-course... We were moving along all five routes of advance. Naturally our move had been spotted by enemy-reconnaissance. And before long the bombers were hovering above the roads, smashing cross-roads, villages, and towns along our line of advance, and pouncing on the long columns of vehicles.'

In Bayerlein's very capable hands, his command was one of the most formidably equipped panzer divisions in Normandy and was also one of the few units at almost full strength. By the beginning of June 1944, it totalled 14,699 officers and





Units from Panzer Lehr first went into action against the British and Canadians in Normandy during the second week of June 1944 losing 20 percent of its troops. A British guard escorts German PoWs to the rear in what looks like a Stoeper R200 Spezial 4x4.



Victim of the US 5th Armored Division—Wespe self-propelled gun belonging to the 116th Panzer Division; Panzer Lehr's Panzer Artillery Regiment 130 included Hummel and Wespe self-propelled guns.



GIs from the US 90th Infantry Division pose with their swastika trophy alongside a Panther belonging to the 116th Panzer Division destroyed in the Chambois area.



Rows of captured German PaK 40 75mm anti-tank guns at Isigny-sur-Mer.

his car was attacked; his aide and his driver were both killed. He got away, slightly wounded but violently shaken.

### Whine of the bullets

Like Bayerlein and Ritgen, Captain Hartdegen was demoralised by the constant bombing and machine-gunning, recalling: 'Unless a man has been through these fighter-bomber attacks he cannot know what the invasion meant. You lie there, helpless, in a roadside ditch, in a furrow on a field, or under a hedge, pressed to the ground, your face in the dirt – and then it comes towards you, roaring. There it is. Diving at you. Now you hear the whine of the bullets. Now you are for it. Our staff car was a gutted heap of metal on the road; it was smouldering and smoking. Corporal Kartheus lay dead in a ditch. As if by a miracle, General Bayerlein got away with a few cuts and shrapnel wounds. As for me, I

was saved by the culvert.'

Just as crucial were the delays. The tanks of Panzer Regiment 130 did not reach the woods to the north of Alençon until early on 7 June. The result was that Bayerlein's two panzergrenadier regiments and panzerjäger battalion were committed in a piecemeal fashion over the next three days. The Panthers did not arrive until the 10th.

Coming up from Lisieux on the 7th, Bayerlein remembered what a bizarre spectacle his division presented: 'Every vehicle was covered with tree branches and moved along hedges and the edges of woods. Road junctions were bombed, and a bridge knocked out at Conde. This did not stop my tanks, but it hampered other vehicles. By the end of the day, I had lost 40 tank trucks carrying fuel, and 90 others. Five of my tanks were knocked out and 84 half-tracks, prime-movers and self-propelled guns...

'These were serious losses for a division not yet in action. I was just east of Tilly on 6 June and ready to attack. My attack took Ellon, and I could have gone straight to the sea down the corridor between the American and British forces, splitting them apart. I was ordered to hold Ellon because units on my right flank had been delayed. I was a day behind my schedule, because of air harassment.'

At Lingevres, Panzer Lehr was thrown into the fray as Lieutenant Ernst recalled: 'We reached Lingevres and straightaway joined in the counter-attack. In the narrow streets, the noise of the tracks and engines of our tanks was deafening. Our tracks screeched as we turned just in front of the church, where we came across the hulk of a British signals tank that had been knocked out. Along a stony track, we headed for a small wood about 300 metres away. "Battle stations! Close hatches!"





Having fought the British, Bayerlein's men moved to the American sector. GIs enjoy the sunshine from their M3 halftrack in the Normandy countryside — the full weight of the US Army's Operation Cobra fell on Panzer Lehr.

came the order from Captain Ritgen. Inside "Zitrone" there was tension in the air... Ahead of "Zitrone" three other tanks were moving in single file up the narrow track.'

Turning westward, Ernst and the others skirted a small wood. Suddenly, they found themselves in the midst of a fire-fight with British tanks. He remembered the fierce action: 'Suddenly, the gun-layers heard the tank commanders shout: "Take aim, enemy tank at 11 o'clock – fire!" I shouted to my gun-layer "Fire!" Our round grazed the top of the Cromwell's cupola and flew past it...

'The enemy disappeared behind the hedge; then we came under fire from the other side. "To the left!" I shouted, and the Panzer IV heaved round with a jolt. The shape of the enemy tank grew larger in the gun sight. The recoil jarred the tank backwards as the round flew towards the thicket. It sounded like a direct hit. Smoke

rose up in the sky. Nothing further moved. Evidently they must have been as surprised as we were, and got out of the tank on impact and thus escaped being killed...'

Carrying their wounded, Ernst and the other tanks of Panzer Lehr withdrew from Lingevres licking their wounds.

### Impossible to win

Although it was only three days into the Allied invasion, Werner Kortenhaus was already full of doom and gloom: 'Hitler should have ended the war on 9 June at the latest because, after all, he had said that if we weren't successful in pushing back the Allied landing, we would have lost the war. We had three fronts – Poland, Italy and the West. It would have been impossible to win.'

After some difficulty, the bulk of Bayerlein's forces came into the line to the left of the 12th SS on 9 June, having driven 90 miles (144km) from Chartes. By

this stage, the frequent air attacks were causing unwelcome shortages with those troops now engaged in the fighting. The division needed 8,000 rounds of 88mm and 60,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition, much of it probably expended shooting at aircraft, but while the quartermaster was sympathetic, petrol shortages meant nothing was reaching him. Even more alarming for Panzer Lehr's panzertruppen there was no tank ammunition to be had.

They first went into action opposite the Canadians, but then side stepped to attack up the road towards Bayeux. The battle of Le Mesnil-Patry resulted in them halting just three miles (5km) from the city on 11 June. Bayerlein then went onto the defensive around Tilly-sur-Seulles and, as the rest of his units arrived, British 30th Corps' advance was blocked. By the 11th, Bayerlein had lost about 25 per cent of his manpower, 20 per cent of his tanks and 10 per cent of his guns. In total, only about 60 Mark IV and V tanks remained serviceable.

Nonetheless, Bayerlein's presence forced the British to shift their efforts west of Caen to the flank of Panzer Lehr and the high ground beyond Villers-Bocage. The idea of a right hook was Major-General GW Erskine's, commander of the 7th Armoured Division, and was first discussed at Lieutenant General GC Bucknall's 30th Corps HQ on 10 June. It was hoped the move would break up the German defences opposite Major General DAH Graham's 50th (Northumbrian) Division, it was also hoped to encircle the now troublesome Panzer Lehr.

When Graham's division drove against Bayerlein, Erskine's division swung to the west driving three quarters of a circle into the American sector, then south through the gap in the German line and eastwards behind Bayerlein at Villers-Bocage. There on 13 June they ran into Tiger tanks of Heavy SS-Panzer Battalion 101. Erskine was stopped dead in his tracks.

Lieutenant Colonel Kurt Kauffman, Operations Officer Panzer Lehr, assembled three field guns, two 88mm flak guns and some rear echelon troops, which he led in a successful attack against the enemy at Villers-Bocage, while panzergrenadiers of the 2nd Panzer Division began attacking from the south. By 1600 hours, the German attacks had been beaten off, with Bayerlein reporting the loss of six precious Tigers and several Panzer IVs. On 14 June, his division was transferred to the control of General von Funck's 47th Panzer Corps.

That day, British 30th Corps launched a series of attacks using 50th Division against Tilly and Panzer Lehr's





American bulldozer clears the smashed remain of two Panzer Lehr Panzer Mk IVs from the road, photographed on 27 July 1944. Judging by the extreme damage to the tank in the foreground they were caught by an air attack.

Panzer Grenadier Regiment 901, in the hope of forcing Bayerlein back to enable Erskine to continue his own ill-fated offensive. Graham's failure to get forward, the arrival of 2nd Panzer, which fanned out north-west of Caumont, north of Livry and north-east of Villers-Bocage, plus the two day delay in the British build-up, meant the 7th Armoured was in danger of being crushed.

Erskine's men formed a defensive box about 1,000 by 700 yards, which was attacked on three sides by German armoured forces on 14 June. Colin Thomson of the 11th Hussars recalled: 'The 3rd and 5th Royal Horse Artillery were firing over open sights into the woods 300 yards away. The result was unbelievable carnage. This battle lasted until 10.30pm when Jerry decided to retire and presumably regroup.'

Bucknall's 30th Corps, failed to ask 2nd Army for direct infantry support for 7th Armoured's beleaguered tanks. In consequence, when Bucknall was visiting 7th Armoured's Tactical HQ, he had both his escort tanks knocked out by lurking Tigers, and on returning to his own HQ, concluded Erskine's communications were in danger of being severed.

### Bitter fighting

By 18-19 June, Bayerlein had lost about 100 of his 240 tanks in the bitter fighting in the Villers-Bocage area. He claimed this had weakened his division to such an extent that it was no longer capable of launching an armoured thrust towards the sea. Between 26 June and 5 July, the 276th Infantry Division, previously deployed in south-western France, relieved Panzer Lehr moving into position on its right flank. By this stage, the division had lost almost 3,000 killed, wounded and missing. Panzer Company 316 (Funklenk) still had seven operational assault guns on 1 July and was pulled out of the front later in July to join the newly formed Panzer Battalion 302 (Funklenk).

Bayerlein's division was placed in reserve and sent just 19 replacement panzers. However, the rest was brief and within five days he was committed against the Americans in General Dietrich von Choltitz's 84th Corps sector. On 11 July, Panzer Lehr counter-attacked the Americans at Le Désert and made some ground. The attack, launched in the early hours, caused the American 30th Infantry Division problems, though the initial success of the panzers was due to a gap between the American 39th and 47th Infantry Divisions south-west

of Le Désert. The Americans rushed in reinforcements, but to the west a column of ten panzers reached south of la Scellerie before losing three Panthers and being driven off.

By 1600, it was clear that Bayerlein had failed to break the Americans lines. American ground forces claimed about 50 panzers and the air force claimed another 22, fighter-bombers reportedly destroying 13 out of 14 panzers near le Hommet-de-Arthenay. In reality, Panzer Lehr lost just 22 tanks to all causes during 1-15 July. Nevertheless, by 2100 on the 11th, the Americans had reoccupied their old positions and the net result of Bayerlein's attack was simply to delay the American 9th Infantry Division by a day. At this stage, the men of Panzer Lehr had suffered 3,140 casualties.

While Panzergruppe West was given the lion share of the resources to fend off the British, General Hausser's 7th Army facing the Americans was starved of troops. It only had 30-35,000 men divided into two corps, though the Americans estimated its strength as 17,000, and 375 tanks and assault guns. When General Montgomery launched Goodwood on 18 July, it convinced Field Marshal von Kluge that the main threat remain in the British sector.

Panzer Lehr now formed the main





Knocked out Panther Ausf A in the ruins of Argentan, this one belonging to the 116th Panzer Division and photographed on 20 August 1944.



American military police escorted P-47 Thunderbolt pilots to examine their handiwork on 19 July 1944. The two Panzer Lehr Panthers are both Ausf As; 215 seems intact and it is likely the crew fled in the face of air attack.

striking force of von Choltitz's 84th Corps, which was guarding the front from St Lô westward to the coast. Scathingly Rundstedt's verdict of Choltitz was 'decent but stupid.' Choltitz was a veteran of the Eastern Front having initially fought as a regimental commander at Sevastopol. Promoted to lieutenant general, he also served in Italy before moving to Normandy. His experience directing panzer forces was patchy.

Although an infantry general, in Russia he commanded 11th Panzer for

two months in early 1943, followed by the 48th Panzer Corps, which included the 3rd and 11th Panzer Divisions, for about five months. The latter suffered heavy losses during the battle of Kursk and General der Panzertruppen Heinrich Eberbach replaced him. In Italy, he had briefly commanded General Traugott Herr's Panzer Corps, consisting of the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzergrenadier Divisions. He assumed command of 84th Corps in mid-June after his predecessor Erich Marcks was killed in action.

Choltitz's command also included the only other armoured formations on the American front, the 2nd SS Panzer Division and the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division. His infantry formations consisted of three infantry divisions and the 91st Airlanding Division. Following the battles in the Cotentin peninsula, these units were completely depleted. The 275th, which had arrived in Normandy piecemeal as Kampfgruppe Heintz, was divided amongst Panzer Lehr, 2nd SS and 84th Corps.

Kluge advised Hausser to use two reserve infantry divisions to replace Panzer Lehr and 2nd SS, but Hausser was reluctant to do so. The 2nd Parachute Corps, under General Eugen Meindl, had its 3rd Parachute Division and 352nd Infantry division deployed east and south of St Lô respectively.

### Hitler's mistrust

By 20 July, Panzer Lehr had redeployed west of St Lo still facing the Americans, though the exhausted reconnaissance battalion and 2nd Battalion Panzergrenadier Regiment 902 were withdrawn to the Percy area for a welcome refit. Word of the failed assassination attempt on Hitler that day quickly reached Panzer Lehr, as Captain Ritgen recalled with dismay at the possible outcome: 'My command post was in a farm house in a village and it was under attack. Normally we never wore steel helmets, but this time my adjutant told me to put mine on. It was much too small for me – it perched on top of my head. Well, we had no idea what was happening in Berlin... Although I loathed Hitler, his death would have been a disaster at that time and have caused such confusion that the enemy would have been confirmed in his goal – the destruction of Germany.'

Hitler's mistrust of his generals became even more marked, further hampering the direction of the Normandy campaign. Otto Henning of Panzer Lehr felt: 'the worst thing for us was that we were no longer allowed to salute in a normal military fashion with our hand raised to our caps. We had to have our arms raised in the Hitler [Nazi Party] salute.'

Just prior to Operation Cobra Panzer Lehr had 80 tanks, of which only 15 Panzer IVs and 16 Panthers were operational and rated suitable only for defensive missions. When the Americans launched Cobra, it was the Panther tanks that were at the front. Luckily Bayerlein's Panzer IVs had been withdrawn to form a reserve and in fact only a few Panthers and tank destroyers were lost to the



preliminary bombing.

The division was also reinforced with elements of the 5th Parachute Division, in the form of Fallschirmjäger Regiment 14 that had recently moved up from Brittany. Its arrival was a mixed blessing; the unit was under strength and under equipped and did not bring any supporting artillery or flak guns with it. Bayerlein also had under his command a battalion of infantry from the 275th Infantry Division, which were the remains of Kampfgruppe Heintz along with Kampfgruppe Brosow from the 2nd SS.

During the night of 23/24, von Choltitz reported to Hausser's 7th Army that there was evidence of American armour concentrating north of the St. Lô-Périers road. 'Nonsense,' replied 7th Army. 'The

### First contact

Major Peter Selerie, Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry came into contact with the 'Panzer Lehr' on 7 June: 'We now pressed onto capture the St Léger feature south-east of Bayeux. It was here that we caught our first glimpse of German tanks since the end of the war in Africa. There were about three or four of them and they withdrew southwards before we could engage them. Subsequently we learned that the enemy had thrown together a series of veteran training cadres to form the crack Panzer Lehr Division. In addition the 12th SS (Hitlerjugend) Division was moving up on our front. Our old desert adversaries – the 21st Panzer Division – were also reported near Caen.'

'It became increasingly obvious that our 75mm guns would not penetrate the frontal armour of the German Mark VI (Tiger) or the Mark V (Panther) tanks. It was exceedingly difficult to get on their flank and fire on the side armour.'

Allies will hit in the Caen sector.' In the prelude to Cobra on 24 and 25 July, Panzer Lehr's positions were heavily bombed. Bayerlein got a warning phone call at his command post at the chateau at Canisy at about 1100. It was a battalion commander from his Panzergrenadier Regiment 901 stationed along the St. Lô-Périers road: 'American infantry [across the road] are abandoning their positions. They are withdrawing everywhere.' In fact, they were pulling back out of the way of the imminent bombardment that would herald Cobra.

Initially, Field Marshal von Kluge at La Roche-Guyon assumed Panzergruppe West had been bombed and phoned General Eberbach for a situation report. When the latter informed him Caen was quiet,

the penny dropped—it was Bayerlein who was on the receiving end. Calling Hausser, von Kluge was still unsure what all the air activity actually meant. Panzer Lehr weathered the first attack on the 24th, losing just 350 men and ten vehicles.

The following day, the bombing cost the division 1,000 men and numerous vehicles caught near the Periers-St Lô road, in particular a number of Panther tanks were lost. Ironically, the Americans inflicted more casualties on their own men when the bombers dropped their payloads short. Many of Panzer Lehr's casualties though are assessed to have been missing or captured rather than dead. The Allied bombers also cut Choltitz's communications with Bayerlein; he sent a runner but received no reply.

Nonetheless, the preceding fighting had proved a heavy drain on Panzer Lehr's manpower and during June and July they lost almost 6,000 men, replacements numbered less than 2,500. Lacking infantry, it meant Bayerlein had to increasingly rely on his tanks and artillery, but this became difficult in the face of ammunition and fuel shortages. Bayerlein's men were in no condition to withstand the American onslaught about to be unleashed on them.

### Hell not as bad

By the end of the 25th, Bayerlein stoically recalled: 'I don't believe hell could be as bad as what we experienced. Luckily, the regimental reserves in the main defence line were still in good shape and were committed at once. They had done most of the day's fighting for the division and to their credit slowed the 9th Infantry Division's advance considerably.'

On the 26th, four panzers and an assault gun attempted to hold the road junction at St Gilles against elements of the US 2nd Armored Division. In response an Allied air strike claimed two tanks and the American armoured column took out the rest. The Americans penetrated seven miles (11km) with the loss of just three tanks. Panzer Artillery Regiment 130's lost its guns north-west of Marigny, which lay between Coutances and St Lô, to the US 3rd Armored Division. Just two days after the American attack opened, Bayerlein had to abandon almost 30 panzers at the repair facility at Cerisy-le-Selle.

Choltitz's command, in danger of being enveloped, attempted to retreat toward Coutances with the US 2nd, 3rd, 4th Divisions pressing on their heels. With the American forces driving on Avranches, Panzer Lehr was subordinated to General Funck's 47th Panzer Corps. On the 27th,

Bayerlein set up a command post at Dangy south of Marigny. All that remained of his division was a small Kampfgruppe with some engineers and anti-aircraft guns deployed at Pont-Brocard. The rest of his men, numbering some 2,300 with Panzergrenadier Regiment 901, 12 tanks and six self-propelled guns, had retreated south to Villedieu-les-Poêles, south west of Percy. Suddenly, tanks of the US 2nd Armored Division swept round his command post, driving off those Panzer Lehr units still at Pont-Brocard.

By the afternoon, Bayerlein found his command reduced to seven officers and 14 enlisted men, gathered in a farmhouse outside Percy. The arrival of American tanks at dusk, which began to shell the building, meant it was every man for himself. Bayerlein, narrowly missing being blown to smithereens, was the last to leave and in the gathering darkness found himself alone heading toward Percy. He reached the town at midnight and, finding a radio, reported the complete loss of his division.

In the meantime, following the failure to hold Cobra, Kluge ordered the dismissal of von Choltitz and 7th Army's Chief of Staff General Max Pemsel. The latter was replaced by Oberst Rudolf-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff, who was to later conduct himself with some valour in the Falaise pocket. Choltitz's poor handling of Panzer Lehr and his Corps not only saw him lose his command, but also gain the poison chalice that was the post of military governor of Paris. Major General Otto Elfeldt, commanding the 47th Infantry Division in the Calais-Boulogne area, replaced von Choltitz.

Quite remarkably by 1 August, Bayerlein was able to muster just over 11,000 men with 33 panzers and Sturmgeschütz, although another 44 were under repair, and just nine howitzers. The only other good news was that the division could still field almost 400 armoured half-tracks. In light of the condition of Panzer Lehr, urgently needing refitting, four days later Kampfgruppe von Hauser was put together with a company of Panzer IVs and a mixed artillery battalion and subordinated to Meindl's 2nd Parachute Corps. Panzer Lehr now found itself under 58th Panzer Corps.

General Walter Krüger and his 58th Reserve Panzer Corps staff stationed in Toulouse, were ordered to Le Mans to help direct the fight against the Americans. Created in France in 1943, the Corps was transferred from Rambouillet, to Mödling, Austria, before taking part in the occupation of Hungary in March 1944. The following month it returned





**Fate of so much German armour in Normandy following Hitler's defeat at Falaise. Visible in the foreground are two Panthers and behind them a number of Panzer Mk IVs.**

to France, this time to Toulouse, coming under General Blaskowitz's Army Group G. From mid July 1941 to the beginning of January 1944, Krüger had been in command of the 1st Panzer Division.

His new command dropped its reserve designation on 6 July and departed on the 27th joining Panzergruppe West two days later, though it was subsequently subordinated to 7th Army and Panzergruppe Eberbach. It formed the southern flank of the counter-attack near Avranches with responsibility for elements of Panzer Lehr and the 17th SS. Amongst Krüger's Corps assets in Normandy were 38 wholly inadequate Panzer Is.

Krüger and his HQ thereby avoided the liberation of Toulouse on 19 August following the Allies landings in southern France. Only two days earlier, Blaskowitz had been ordered to abandon the city and start withdrawing north. General Ferdinand Neuling's 62nd Corps at Draguignan, a few miles northwest of Le Muy were not so lucky and found themselves surrounded, his two infantry divisions lost in Marseilles and Toulon.

In the meantime, the rest of Bayerlein's

forces were instructed to move to Alençon to refit in position between the 9th Panzer Division and 708th Infantry Division by 9 August. From these units another Kampfgruppe was formed, including panzergrenadiers from 9th Panzer and deployed between Joblains and Conlie. By 11 August, 7th Army's tactical headquarters was at St André, the subordinate 2nd Parachute Corps, comprising the 3rd Parachute Division supported by a Kampfgruppe from Panzer Lehr, was holding a line from Chênedollé to Vire.


By the 12th, Kampfgruppe von Hausser was retiring eastward toward Fontainebleau. The following day Bayerlein ordered the rest of his men to follow and they were soon east of Argentan, thereby missing the chaos of the developing Falaise pocket. Panzer Lehr saw action again in the Nonant-le-Pin-St Lombard area, but on the 17th was relieved. Bayerlein's troops were able to continue on their way to Fontainebleau and safety ready to fight another day. Hitler's most powerful panzer division in Normandy had failed in its appointed task •

## Cobra Strikes

Operation Cobra's opening aerial attack fell squarely on Panzer Lehr and Bayerlein chronicled the brutal destruction of his division: 'Units holding the front were almost completely wiped out, despite, in many cases, the best possible equipment of tanks, anti-tank guns and self-propelled guns. Back and forth the bomb carpets were laid, artillery positions were wiped out, tanks overturned and buried, infantry positions flattened and all roads and tracks destroyed.

'By midday the entire area resembled a moon landscape, with the bomb craters touching rim to rim, and there was no longer any hope of getting out any of our weapons. All signal communications had been cut and no command was possible. The shock effect on the troops was indescribable. Several men went mad and rushed dementedly round in the open until they were cut down by splinters. Simultaneously with the storm from the air, innumerable guns of the American artillery poured drumfire into our field positions.'





Moroccans preferred to fight on horseback, using mobility and surprise as key weapons. But against disciplined French formations and modern weaponry, including machine guns, these men were cut down in droves.

# *Carnage in Casablanca*

A massacre of European train drivers proved to be the excuse the French needed to invade Morocco. In the wake of turmoil in Tunisia and Egypt, SIMON REES exposes the dark military history behind this North African country.

**T**he North African sun had reached its zenith and within the confines of the locomotive's cab the temperature soared. Despite the discomfort, the job was comparatively simple—the train brought stones from the nearby quarry to where the new jetty was being built. But that day, through the heat haze, the driver noticed something seriously amiss—stones had been laid across the tracks and an angry crowd had gathered,

forcing the train to a halt. The two railway men, both Europeans, realised they were in grave danger, jumped out and started to run. They were too late. The mob caught up and beat the pair to death. A similar fate befell several other Western workers at the quarry. Their bodies were dashed on the rocks and stoned. According to reports, the corpses were then taken to the ocean and dumped in the sea.

## **Rod of iron**

By 1900, the scramble for Africa was slowing, although several 'anomalies' remained, including Morocco. However, it was not long before the tentacles of French imperialism started to squeeze the North African kingdom. By 1906, Morocco was recognised as within the French sphere of influence by the other great powers, even by a begrudging Germany. In the past, the sultans of Morocco ruled with a rod of iron to



maintain sovereignty, although only the coastal zones, the accessible plains and the major cities were under their control. The lands beyond were *bled el siba*—the lawless or dissident country.

Money – or the lack of it – was a perennial problem. Morocco had fallen into the abyss of a vast trade imbalance, with Western imports flooding into the country. These included luxury goods that commanded exorbitant premiums. Even Sultan Abd el-Aziz was bedazzled: he spent a fortune on a countless array of useless items, while his army of about 22,000 regulars was left to rot. Corruption stymied military reform. The soldiers made money when on a *harka*, rampaging through the countryside pillaging the sultan's enemies – and sometimes the sultan's friends. 'The soldiers are wretchedly equipped and badly disciplined: in fact, they are simply a band of robbers employed for the collection of taxes,' wrote Donald Mackenzie, a veteran resident of Morocco, in 1911.

As wealth flowed out of the country or was frittered away. French banks stepped in, offering enticing loans to the upper echelons of society. This included the Sultan, who gave up shares in future customs revenue in return for ready cash. He was soon in the thrall of the financiers. To make matters worse, there were several high-profile kidnappings and insurgent threats during his short reign, most of which were handled poorly. In the words of Gavin Maxwell, he became 'enmeshed in a gigantic web of intrigue, woven and rewoven by hundreds of spiders in collaboration'. For most Moroccans meaningful contact with Westerners was rare, although there was greater interaction in the coastal regions, where many sought employment with European traders. Made 'agents', these Moroccans were granted protection from the arbitrary justice of local rulers. Unscrupulous traders knew how attractive this was and exacted large tributes before hiring, creating widespread resentment.

### On the edge

In 1907, Casablanca was a relatively nondescript Moroccan town of around 10,000 residents. It was surrounded by a fertile band of rolling countryside stretching from the Atlas foothills to the Atlantic shoreline. This region was called the Chaouia. Casablanca had mushroomed up within a generation and a small but noticeable proportion of its new arrivals were Europeans eager

to seek their fortunes. The town's great disadvantage at this stage was its lack of port facilities, although the European traders had won a concession to build a large man-made harbour, work on which was going at full speed by summer 1907.

The new railway line to transport stone from the quarry passed the edge of, some say through, a local cemetery. Every day the engine would shuttle back and forth, its whistle considered by Moroccans to be a sign of derision. For many, it was the final straw – their country had been brought to its knees by inept rule and foreign intrigue, but now the dead were being desecrated. On July 28, the headmen of 11 Chaouia tribes visited Sidi ben Bouzid, the Sultan's representative in the region, demanding all harbour works be brought to a halt. The latter gave ineffectual replies, probably hoping the affair would blow over. If this was the case, he was sorely mistaken.

The massacre of the railwaymen and quarry workers occurred two days later. Watching the disaster unfurl was Moulai el-Amin, one of the Sultan's uncles, who dismissed Sidi ben Bouzid and took charge. Playing a quick ace, he informed the leading tribesmen that he wished

to discuss matters in an open meeting outside Casablanca's walls. He then ordered the gates closed once they had gathered, cutting them off and enabling the swift restoration of order. Although grave, the matter looked resolved. But the carnage had played into French hands – the warship *Galilée* had already been ordered to head for Casablanca at full speed and prepare for action. Additional reinforcements were hot on their heels.

*Galilée* arrived off the coast of Casablanca on the morning of 1 August. The commander, Olivier, was met by the French consul who stressed the situation was under control and that the ship's landing party – much to their bitter disappointment – should remain on board. On 4 August, a French vice-consul came on board. Almost immediately, the diplomat was jostled by *Galilée*'s men. It was an affront to France, they cried—the murderers should be brought to justice. These stinging words appear to have directly influenced policy.

Moulai el-Amin was told to arrest and hand over the killers. In response, the Sultan's uncle decided to transfer control of Casablanca – let the French deliver justice if that was their wish. *Galilée* was

Map showing main towns, villages and sites of battle during the Chaouia campaign of 1907/08.







**Some of the first Senegalese troops arrive. These troops impressed observers with their professionalism.**

signalled to send a landing party in the early hours before the town had woken. This group was to head to the French consulate, where most diplomats and Europeans had gathered for protection. Bolstering the defences, they would wait for the arrival of reinforcements who would then impose martial law. Unfortunately, none of these decisions were made known to the town's guard.

At first light, three boats carrying just over 60 marines and sailors set off from the *Galilée*. Pitching through the surf, they reached the shore, jumped out and headed towards the old harbour gate. Ensign Ballande led the way. Several surprised Moroccan guards watched the landings with no inkling of the agreement between their commander and the French. They started to close the heavy doors but Ballande was quick enough to force an entry. In the ensuing bustle, one of the Moroccans' rifles was accidentally fired. It was a red rag to a bull. The landing party now surged up the alleys towards the consulate, pummelling those who got in their way – primarily innocent civilians. The men reached the consulate and were warmly welcomed by the Europeans sheltering there.

The landing party had been told to contact *Galilée* for fire support if any

resistance was offered and a signal was duly sent. It was not long before naval shells started to tear into Casablanca. 'Houses are gutted. Plaster walls, in falling, fill the air with clouds of dust. In the four corners of the town the shells explode with a dull roar,' reported *Figaro* correspondent Georges Bourdon. Massed looting erupted and the Jews living in the mellah district were attacked, with many killed or enslaved. On 5 August, the French were reinforced with men arriving off the ship *Du Chayla*. Assisting was a Spanish contingent that had also just arrived. More troops were landed not long after, including Foreign Legionaries and a sizeable number of Senegalese tirailleurs.

The Casablanca massacre and its aftershocks were disastrous for the Sultan. In Marrakech, the town's pasha Moulai Hafid – half brother of the Abd el-Aziz – felt confident enough to claim the sultanate. He was backed by Madani el-Glaoui, who had made his clan one of the greatest powers in the south. Abd el-Aziz moved court from Fez to Rabat, just north of the Chaouia. Moulai Hafid's forces reached the area's south eastern periphery on 26 September. They arrived to find the region was in uproar, its people already striking back at the French.

### **Itching to fight**

On 18 August, a large force of Moroccans attacked Casablanca, although they created more noise than damage. The French forced their speedy withdrawal with a liberal dose of 75mm artillery. Afterwards, the pattern of warfare became quickly standardised: two companies of French Foreign Legionaries and a squadron of Algerian cavalymen, the spahis, would sally out of Casablanca. Accompanying them were Algerian levies, *goumiers*. The men would form a marching square – cavalry on the flanks – and trudge out into the Chaouia prepared for an inevitable attack. The two sides would then blast away at each other until the French retired to the safety of their defence lines.

In command was General Antoine Drude. In September, he had the perfect opportunity to crush the enemy when his columns converged on Tahaddert, more than five miles from Casablanca. Caught unawares, the Moroccans started to flee from their camp. Drude ordered a methodical but cumbersome advance that descended into chaos when the tirailleurs started to loot instead of attack. Officers, it was reported, had to beat the men back into formation with the flats of their swords. French Prime Minister





French forces are unloaded at the harbour, the small size of which can be clearly seen. Note the railway line on the left.

George Clemenceau was unimpressed and offensive operations in the Chaouia were halted with immediate effect – the soldiers now tasked to defend Casablanca alongside the Spanish contingent. Clemenceau was also keeping the powder dry. With both the Abd el-Aziz and Moulai Hafid in the vicinity, it was probably best to let the pair fight between themselves first.

But the Sultan remained in Rabat, soaking in the luxury of its palace, while Moulai Hafid continued to trumpet his reputation as Morocco's last-best hope. To bolster this position, he ordered a large section of his forces to Settât, south of Casablanca. Moulai Hafid was trying to win kudos by threatening the French without risking an engagement. Privately, he was also sending out feelers to the enemy. Both he and Madani el-Glaoui knew French funding would be needed if they managed to defeat the Sultan. But the plans went awry when thousands of Moroccans from the Chaouia and other regions flocked to Settât.

By December 1907, it was estimated that over 10,000 men had gathered, with many more on their way. All were itching to fight the French with or without Moulai Hafid's consent. Most fought with religious zeal and almost all were

excellent horsemen. Their weapons included Winchester and Martini rifles, along with traditional knobkerries, swords and daggers. They were a threat the French could no longer ignore and the new commander, General d'Amade, was given permission to head out and force a decisive battle.

### Into the interior

In January 1908, d'Amade commanded 10,000 men, although this included ancillary units and support staff. By April, the number reached 14,000. Apart from their 75mm guns, the French were equipped with machine guns and Lebel rifles. An observation balloon was dragged along and was known among the men as *le cafard* – the cockroach, a slang term for a snitch. For although the balloon helped spot the enemy, it also advertised the French approach for miles around. Later on, it was left moored in Casablanca before finally being packed up and returned to France.

On 12 January 1908, 2,500 French troops and cavalrymen formed up and marched out of Casablanca. They camped at Ber Rechid and were joined by an additional battalion and a half arriving from Mediouna a few days later. By early 15 January, the united force

had reached the environs of Settât. The French secured their flanks, formed a long line and advanced towards the enemy's camp firing by sections. D'Amade ordered his men to fix bayonets as his cavalry contingent charged ahead, cutting down at least 40 Moroccans. Thousands more were simply too quick and vanished into the wilderness. The French then marched into Settât to find only poor Jewish residents begging for clemency. But the troops did not stay long—they formed a large marching square and headed back the way they came.

On 21 January, d'Amade left Casablanca with around 2,000 men, heading north along the coast road to Rabat. Over the next few days, the force reached the casbah of Bou Znika and then turned southeast to enter a small section of the giant Schoul cork forest. The balloon proved burdensome here, the branches hindering its progress. Once through this obstacle, the column camped at the shrine of Sidi ben Sliman. By 24 January, the men were marching across rolling countryside that reminded Lt Col Sir Reginald Rankin, reporting for *The Times*, of Salisbury plain.

Almost without warning, they found themselves stumbling through an empty camp – the tents in disarray but much





Pottelain Parvillat, auteur, Nissonne (Aisne) - Dépêche

**A 75mm gun is put through its paces on an exercise in France. This deadly and versatile weapon was ably handled by French gunners and inflicted fearsome casualties on the enemy.**

of the equipment still in place. Rankin and others believed le cafard had given the surprised Moroccans just enough time to flee. Less fortunate was Colonel Boutegourd's column, which was engaged heading towards M'Koun on a west-east axis from Mediouna. Here a battery of 75s was brought into action, their shrapnel shells forcing the Moroccans to pull back. Their retreat was then spurred on by a French cavalry charge that accounted for at least 20 Moroccans killed. Boutegourd and d'Amade's forces united and arrived back in Casablanca several days later.

The French now decided to change tack and engage in some cattle rustling. The strategy was simple—by taking the livestock on which he depended, the Moroccan would be forced to admit defeat. In early February, Colonel Boutegourd and a force of infantry and cavalry managed to capture a large herd at Sidi el Mekki. The Moroccans were not prepared to let the theft go unmolested and around 5,000 horsemen were quick to attack. Later reporting 11

dead and 41 wounded, the French were saved by their machine gun, the bullets from which took a fearsome toll. Firing the weapon was a man called Bosquet. According to Rankin, the Frenchman 'continued to pour a stream of bullets into the dense masses of the enemy, until the ground in front of him rose up in a wall of dead and dying men and horses'. Rankin later asked Bosquet how he felt to have been the lynchpin in defeating the Moroccan charges. 'Curiously enough, I felt no fear; I kept thinking to myself: "What wouldn't I give for a camera!"'

#### **Trouble spot**

Settat remained a potential trouble spot and d'Amade decided to revisit it, putting the Moroccans there to flight for a second time. The town's resident Jews were found in an awful condition: the local population had directed its anger towards them after the French had left for the first time. According to Rankin, 25 Jewish men had been arbitrarily executed. To d'Amade's credit, the operation was called off and an immediate evacuation

organised, the survivors taken back to the safety of Casablanca.

In mid-February, d'Amade decided to launch a major strike eastwards using converging columns to reach Abd-el-Kerim. On 17 February, Colonel Taupin led his column out of Bou Znika and followed the same path through the Sehoul cork forest taken by d'Amade in January. Reaching the plateau close to M'Koun, Taupin's men were ferociously attacked. The Moroccans clearly knew Taupin's column was the weakest and almost broke into the French square. Taupin wisely ordered a retreat at the first available opportunity. Five officers and 34 other ranks were later reported dead, with many others injured.

Also being mauled, but holding its ground, was Colonel Brulard's column marching from Ber Rechid. D'Amade's strongest column, the one he was leading, had advanced south and then swung northeast to Abd-el-Kerim, despite hearing the sound of gunfire. On reaching his goal, the general sent two gun batteries and four infantry companies to help Brulard. In





**Cemetery outside the walls of Rabat. The decision by traders to build and operate a rail line close to a cemetery in Casablanca enraged the Chaouia's inhabitants and led to the massacre of European railway and quarry workers.**



**Colonial troops at ease in Casablanca. Scorch marks on the buildings and the debris on the left are testament to the ferocity of Galiléé's bombardment and the subsequent looting.**



**Advanced position on the outskirts of Casablanca.**



**Wireless station established by the French at Ber Rechid in March 1908. It acted as an early-warning post, feeding intelligence secured from the surrounding countryside back to Casablanca.**



**French colonial troops and supplies are rowed into Casablanca.**

hindsight, d'Amade should have marched to the sound of battle at full strength – he might have caught his enemy in a crushing vice. Instead, Brulard and the reinforcements marched into Abd-el-Kerim tired and exhausted, reporting four dead and 26 wounded. The Moroccans were undefeated.

In France, there were fears the campaign had become bogged down and, as is so often the way, the politicians were suddenly more concerned about public opinion than the practicalities on the ground. To inspect the conditions in Casablanca, Clemenceau decided to send Hubert Lyautey, the mercurial commander of French forces dominating the borderlands between Morocco and Algeria. With him went the politician Regnault. In the event neither was required: the campaign was entering its final phase.

D'Amade had assembled about 5,500 troops, including cavalry and all available artillery. Marching east from Casablanca, the French reached and

engaged the enemy at R'Fakha. However, they then dithered between taking an offensive or defensive strategy, allowing the Moroccans to attack. The greatest pressure fell upon the French cavalry, who were forced to make disorganised and desperate counter charges.

By the end of the engagement, they reported 12 dead and 25 wounded. Tirailleurs eventually came up in support and helped push the enemy back, losing two dead and four wounded in the process. According to Rankin, these last casualties were caused by friendly artillery fire. Meanwhile, French Zouave units, believing the enemy defeated, had blundered into an ambush. 'A dark line rose up 50 yards in front of them and fired a volley into their ranks,' wrote Rankin. Despite displaying enormous courage, the Moroccans were unable to exploit the surprise – the return fire and discipline of the Zouaves was simply too difficult and deadly to overcome.

After the engagement, French troops who had fallen out of the ranks and been temporarily captured were

discovered horrifically mutilated. Others had been put to agonising deaths. In this campaign no quarter was given. At R'Fakha, Rankin records how one of the Chasseurs' eyes had been gouged out, 'the blood streaming from their sockets'. Another had been taken to a camp fire, had his hands bound behind his back and his head then pressed into the flames.

But neither the French nor the accompanying correspondents took prisoners, often denigrating their opponents as subhuman to excuse their actions. At the battle of M'Karto, Rankin records how one wounded Moroccan was shot twice by a journalist. 'But that did not suffice; a bullet through the head from a carbine was needed before that tough savage departed for his Paradise.' Much later in the campaign, Rankin watched a French soldier shoot a prisoner in the head and then remark, as the man continued to groan: 'he's not dead, the bastard – the carrion!'





**M'Dakra tribesmen take a pause. The tribe had vainly opposed d'Amade's advance through their lands, losing hundreds when the French bombarded their camp.**



**French High Command inspect the ruins of Casbah Ben Ahmed. The Chaouia had been a wealthy and prestigious region in the days of Old Morocco, but like the rest of the country, it had been ravaged by years of decay, corruption and exploitation by the time of the campaign.**



**Moulai Hafid, the Pasha of Marrakesh and the Abd-el-Aziz's half brother. Backed by Madani el-Glaoui, he claimed the sultanate as anger and outrage spread from the Chaouia across Morocco.**



**Abd-el-Aziz—a quick and intelligent young man, but easily swayed by poor advice, his efforts to reform Morocco were thwarted by corruption, turgid traditionalism and a failure to bring spending under control.**

### **Castles made of sand**

On 7 March, the French were heading south to fight the M'Dakra clan. Following several small engagements, they neared an immense prickly pear plantation. The M'Dakra camp lay in a nearby gorge close to M'Karto. The tribesmen and their families were hurriedly packing their belongings, hoping to make a quick escape. But the French were too fast. Artillery was brought up and shells soon falling on the camel-hair tents. 'The din was awful; the carnage gruesome,' wrote Rankin.

D'Amade eventually ordered a cease fire; women and children were among those attempting to escape; there were limits even in this brutal war – or so it seemed.

The battle that cracked resistance in the Chaouia occurred in mid-March. Intelligence was received that a major Moroccan leader, Bou Nuallah, was camping with his army near the shrine of Zaouia Sidi el Ourimi. A strong French column was immediately dispatched and the subsequent battle grimly predictable. The Moroccan horsemen launched a series of charges that were pulverised by

artillery fire. It was not long before they were hastily retreating, harried by the victorious French. 'This is not a battle, it is a race,' Rankin overheard one French officer say. Soon afterwards, the French approached the camp of their enemy. After a fierce barrage, the men were ordered to fix bayonets and charge.

Watching the horror unfold, Rankin noticed a huddle of Moroccans standing under a hail of shrapnel. One among them, possibly an imam, was making passionate entreaties skywards. Moroccans hiding in tents and then





**Column of colonial troops files past the old fort at Ber Rechid. These men were the backbone of French forces deployed in the Chaouia campaign.**

sniping at the backs of the passing French forces provoked a further frenzy of killing. Several Moroccans were hunted down and bayoneted in front of Rankin.

One spahi found a man, his wife and their baby sitting outside a tent, almost as if they had been waiting for this grim finale. The man rose, begging for mercy in Allah's name. 'The spahi muttered a curse, and his sabre fell across the man's head, and drops of blood bespattered the white robe of the silent woman at his side.' Still not dead, the Moroccan staggered, crying out in fury. Two tirailleurs rushed to the scene and bayoneted him. 'The dying man sank back, calling on Mohammed, his black beard pointing to the sky... And still the woman never stirred, nor cried.'

After the battle there were still smatterings of resistance. But these were of limited consequence and d'Amade could happily report to his political masters that the Chaouia had been 'pacified'. However, there was one last drama to unfold: the fall of Abd el-Aziz. Learning that his arch rival passed through the lands of Zaian confederacy and had then taken Fez, the Sultan decided to strike at Moulai Hafid's powerbase in Marrakech. Joining him

were the southern rivals of Madani el-Glaoui, keen to plunder their enemy's territory and possessions. On 8 August, the Sultan left the Chaouia and entered the Haouz region accompanied by a French military mission and 75mm artillery with attending instructors. On 19 August, an enemy camp was sighted and the artillery told to start shelling. The instructors protested: the enemy was not yet in range. But the Sultan insisted and in Morocco his word was law – although not for long.

As predicted, the shells fell short. Abd el-Aziz now ordered his cavalry to charge. Only a smattering of shots had been exchanged when the Sultan's men made a sudden about-face and rushed back, shouting they had been defeated. Commentators have since wondered whether treachery was afoot. Whatever the cause, the consequence was pandemonium. Foot soldiers, cavalymen and army followers started to loot their own camp. In the mad free-for-all, Abd el-Aziz gathered his harem and his European advisors and fled northwards.

Reaching the French base now established in the ruined shell of Settat, the Sultan arrived a defeated and broken man. The French helped negotiate his

abdication and Moulai Hafid's ascension. The latter initially towed an anti-French line in public. But in private, he too became a victim of the bankers, quickly falling into a life of indolence and luxury.

Meanwhile, for the people of the Chaouia, there was the realisation that they were under French domination for the foreseeable future. Casablanca and its environs had become a base camp and staging post for future French operations. More positively, money and investment started to flow into the region, particularly into its agriculture – although how much of this reached the indigenous people is debatable.

The Moroccans had tried and failed to win by fighting a war more suited to an age long past. They were facing opponents using the latest technology and utterly unfamiliar tactics. The Moroccan inability to adapt and make up for these serious shortcomings meant victory was impossible despite their numerical advantage. For the French, Casablanca was a colonial conflict. For the Moroccans, it was a total war. It was also a struggle that initiated Morocco's slow and final spiral towards losing independence, although few at the time could foresee this •





# Generation of Villains

Looked down on as 'dross and scum' by their contemporaries, the Kern were the rank and file of any Irish army. FERGUS CANNAN reveals the true character of these fighting Irishmen.



Kern soldiers (left and right) accompany a galloglass in the mid-16 century. (Painting by Angus McBride)



**T**he 'kern' or ceithearnach was the ordinary fighting clansman of medieval and early modern Ireland. Although the galloglass and horseman were the more privileged classes of warrior, it was the kern that made up the numbers. Without kern, there could be no Irish armies. More a force of nature than a professional soldier, by Shakespeare's time the 'shag-haired crafty kern' had become a popular figure of hate in the English imagination. Though they formed an essential component of government forces in Ireland, the 'uncivil kerns of Ireland' (Shakespeare, *Henry VI*, part II) would always be seen as

incorrigible rebels and troublemakers.

The actual word 'kern' is a phonetic anglicising of the Irish ceithearn meaning in a general sense a 'war-band' or 'troop', and having in its roots in words signifying 'battle' and 'slaughter'. From ceithearn comes ceithearnach for 'trooper'. The ceithearnach, however, was understood to be a specific type of Irish soldier – he was the light infantryman of Gaelic Ireland, distinguished by his equipment and manner of fighting from the two other major troop-types found in the country, the galloglass and horseman.

### Hags of Hell

Barnaby Rich, a marvellously cantankerous English soldier of the Armada era, described the 'Kerne of Ireland' rather differently. To Rich, they were 'the very drosse and scum of the Countrey, a generation of Villaines not worthy to live... the verie Hags of Hell, fit for nothing but for the gallows.' To Robert Payne, an Elizabethan settler in Munster, kern were simply 'warlike men': there can be no better summary of kern than. Hardy and lightly armoured, the common kern was a pugnacious survivor who had learned his craft the hard way from blood-feuds, cattle raids and desperate brawls. Above all else, the kern was, as an idea and class of warrior, wholeheartedly Gaelic and wholeheartedly rural, leading Thomas Blount to comment in 1656 in his *Glossographia*: 'We take a Kern most commonly for a Farmer or Country Bumpkin.' A century earlier, the English merchant William Towerson had likewise noted that it was 'The country people which were wilde Kernes.'

Rich saw Ireland as a static society ordered by arcane customs without social mobility, claiming that 'If the father hath been a horseman, the sonne will be a horsman: if the father hath beene a Galoglas, the sonne will be a Galloglas: if the father hath beene a Kerne, the sonne will be a Kerne: if the father have been a horse boy, the son will be no better.' Yet while kern might seem 'scum' to Rich, the reality was that most of their number belonged to what was a fairly privileged section of Irish society formed of free farmers, lesser tenants, younger and bastard sons of noblemen – a sort of Hibernian yeomanry analogous to that much-feared and curiously classless Highland Scot, the so-called 'caterans', or more properly in Scottish Gaelic ceathairne. As late as 1822, David Stewart was able to remark of the Scottish Highlands: 'There was a peculiar

class called Kearnachs... Some of these Kearnachs died in my remembrance.'

The fact that Scotland had its own kern class may explain Shakespeare's mysterious lines in *Macbeth* that 'the merciless MacDonald ... from the Western Isles 'kerns and galloglasses is supplied...' This is certainly intriguing. More likely is that the bard of Stratford had deliberately abridged for poetical purposes of scan and flow, or had simply misread, a passage relating to the reign of Macbeth in the *Chronicles of Raphael Holinshed*, a work Shakespeare regularly mined for historical detail, where we are told that to the 'Makdowalde' there flocked from 'the westerne Isles' a 'great multitude of people... and out of Ireland in hope of the spoyle came no small number of Kernes & Galloglasses'.

Whether Scotsman or Irishman, the bearing of arms was the Gaelic man's proof and assertion of free status within his clan, kin-group or community. A medieval Irish army was no Gaelic levée en masse and only in emergencies were the lowest grades of Irish society – that vast mass of semi-servile working people whose existence the bards and chroniclers barely acknowledged, and then only with passing contempt – fielded as soldiers by their chiefs. Speaking of the Irish military order of precedence, the Anglo-Irish scholar Richard Stanihurst considered kern to rank above horse-boys and the 'little yong wags called Daltinnes' (Irish: dailtín, fosterling, brat), but below the galloglass, who in turn came below the horsemen, grandest of the lot bar, says Stanihurst, the 'lord or capitaine.' Without question, most kern would have felt themselves to be men of a certain – if not always easily definable or apparent to outsiders – social consequence, a point illustrated by the wonderfully confused pardon granted by Henry VIII to one 'Peter Walshe, of Derconnor, gent., otherwise called Peter Walshe, of Arnemellan, yeoman, otherwise Peter Walsche, of Unane, horseman or kern.'

### Rising Out

Within the category of Irish kern there existed two sub-types of soldier. One was a peasant clansman fighting for a single lord in the 'rising out' (Irish: gairmsluaigh) or general muster of his people; the other was a wandering mercenary or buanna employed for a few months at a time. Both types were similarly armed and attired. The 'rising out' included all men fit to bear arms, save for the learned professionals of the clan (clergy, bards and so on). Pledges





Standing on a rocky islet in the River Suir, Cahir Castle was one of Ireland's most formidable strongholds. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Republic of Ireland)

of loyalty, feudal or tribal dues, and networks of extended family were not a terribly efficient means of raising an army, and despite fines and penalties charged in coin and cattle, many simply ignored the call to arms.

For this reason, professional – and more dependable – mercenary kern became a major component of medieval Irish armies. As well as fielding hordes of part-time kern levied in the rising out, Irish chiefs would often keep a small selection of dependable ‘household kern’ or *ceithearn tigh*, who acted as a kind of police force of bodyguard-thugs for their master. It was household kern and the marauding mercenary kern who were most loathed by the English and by Ireland’s civilian population, because when not fighting in the retinue of a lord, the mercenary kern was liable to ‘earn’ his living as a violent kleptomaniac brigand.

It speaks volumes that the term ‘kern’ came to mean among the English not just a particular kind of fighting-man, but a loutish Irish yokel, insurgent or bandit (and sometimes all three). A war-band of mercenary kern must indeed have been made up of all kind of unsavoury drifters – men perfectly prepared to steal, pillage and kill in order to get their own

way. Yet being a mercenary kern must also have often been a hellish existence ruled by fear, feuds and violence for the mercenaries themselves. Those embarking on such a life were liable to leave the profession feet first.

### Cutting English Throats

To a large extent ordinary life must have prepared the kern for war. As peasant clansmen, their whole lives would have been consumed by rivalries and strife. In rural Ireland, raids by brigands and soldiers were common; no law and order existed, and men would have learned from boyhood to always be on their guard. There being no clear division between peace and war, the common kern would likely be already hardened long before the time he first picked up a sword as a soldier.

Even Edmund Spenser, a poet and colonial administrator generally contemptuous of the Ireland and the Irish, was full of admiration for the courage and stoical resilience of Irish soldiers: ‘Yet sure they are very valiaunt, and hardie, for the most part great indurers of colde, labour, hunger, and all hardnesse, very active and strong of hand, very swift of foot, very vigilant and circumspect in their

enterprises, very present in perils, very great scornors of death.’ And Spenser goes on to say that in his opinion the kern was, unlike the transplanted Scots galloglass, the only ‘proper Irish souldier’. Sir Anthony St Leger, Henry VIII’s Lord Deputy of Ireland, said much the same in 1543, that Irish soldiers ‘be of such hardness, that there is no other man that ever I saw, that will or can endure the pains and evil fare that they will sustain’.

All the same, we know from a Tudor government report that formal military training was provided to Irish boys from the age of 16, doubtless by family members and foster relatives. ‘On the job’ training was available too, Spenser observing that it was common for kern to have been grooms or ‘idle’ horse boys in their youth, often to English gentlemen. Spenser deemed this a ‘foul oversight’, since the young Irish grooms learned many useful skills from their English masters, such as shooting. Effectively, complained Spenser, the English were training Irish boys how to become kern, so that when those youngsters grew up they were all the more proficient at cutting English throats. Spenser also says that young Irishmen would often band together and, as a sort of bloody rite of passage, head off





Figure from the silver decorative plates of the Stowe missal, a vellum manuscript associated with St Maelruain of Tallaght dating from about 800 AD, and enshrined in an oak box covered with silver plates in the 11th century. Perhaps in the manic stare of this swordsman the true spirit of the kern is revealed. (Drawing by F Cannan)



Irish sword from Lough Neagh, 16th century, with characteristic Irish open ring-pommel. (National Museums Northern Ireland)

together with their weapons and simply look for trouble.

### Rank-and-file muscle

As a rule, kern were paid less than cavalry, galloglass, 'New Scots', or gunners – kern were, after all, the rank-and-file muscle of an Irish army. The accounts of the justiciar Ralph Ufford from the mid-14th century therefore list kern as receiving only a penny day, compared with two pence a day for archers. Pay in Ireland usually came in the form of goods rather than coins and 'dead pays' were a key aspect of Irish military organization, 'dead pays' being non-existent men whose pay and victuals the captain was allowed to take to make up his own salary. As kern were paid less than galloglass, horsemen and so on, captains of kern were accordingly permitted fewer dead pays than commanders of other service arms. That does not mean that life as a mercenary kern was poorly paid – on the contrary, it was a licence to behave badly. It meant, too, an ample and free supply of food, drink, hospitality, entertainment and other perks. These freebies were forcibly – but legally – levied from the civilian populace by their lords by means of 'coyne and livery', a system of

tributes often amounting to nothing short of extortion.

John Dymmok, who served in the retinue of Elizabeth I's Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, provides the classic description of a kern armed for war: 'a kind of footman, slightly armed with a sword, a target of wood, or a bow and sheaf of arrows with barbed heads, or else three darts which they cast with a wonderful facility and nearness, a weapon more noisome to the enemy, especially horsemen, than it is deadly.' This description is clearly sound, and for hundreds of years the kern was indeed a lightly-armed foot-soldier equipped with a sword (Irish: *cloidhem*) or dagger (*scian*), bow (*boga*) or set of javelins or 'darts' (*ga*), and little or no armour.

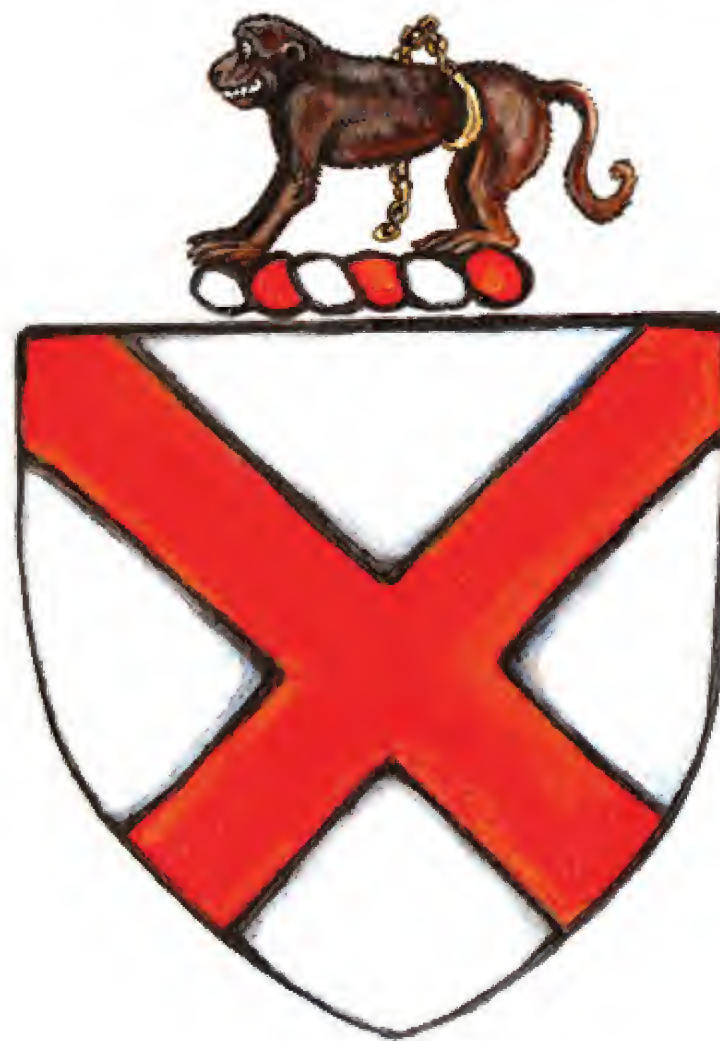
Nevertheless, kern were not always without bodily defence: aside from carrying little round shields, helmets were sometimes worn, and it is likely fabric and leather forms of armour were used by some too. Equally, it true, as Spenser says, that many kern wore no armour at all, 'trusting to the thicknes of their glibbs, the which (they say) will sometimes beare off a good stroke.' A Tudor government report agreed, summarizing the kern as a soldier armed with a bow, sword, '3

speares' (i.e. darts) and 'without harneys' – that is, without armour. The same report also notes that for every two kern there was a 'ladde' who carried their 'geare'. So, like the galloglass, the kern was accompanied by an attendant or squire-like figure (probably an apprentice warrior), reflecting the custom in non-feudalised or only partially feudalised Ireland that every warrior was, almost by definition, a gentleman worthy of having a retainer to wait on him.

For centuries, the basic look of the kern remained the same, even if details of weapon design developed. Gerald of Wales noted how Irish soldiers entered battle without armour, carrying short spears, axes and 'darts', while, centuries later, the great English historian and herald William Camden could still accurately present the kern in his *Britannia* as 'light armed footmen... whose service is with darts and skeanes.' There was, of course, a wider range of arms than dart, sword and dagger on offer, and some kern used the axe (*tuagh*) or spear (*cráisech* or *sleg*); in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* we in fact hear of 'wretched kern, whose arms / Are hired to bear their staves.'

Much of this equipment would have been made by Irish





**Left: Arms of Ireland featuring the famous harp, for centuries an important national symbol of Irish culture and identity.**

**Centre: Arms of the Earls of Kildare, for a time Ireland's most powerful dynasty.**

**Right: The arms of the Keating family: argent, a saltire gules between four nettle leaves vert. The Keatings adopted a coat of arms modelled on those borne by Kildare, presumably as a way of cementing and romanticising the unequal relationship between the two families of lord and retainers. The red saltire on white shield is derived from the arms of the Earls of Kildare, who the Keating family followed. Four nettle leaves have been superimposed onto the Kildare arms – a sign that as suppliers of mercenary kern they were prepared to grasp those nettles that others would not? (Paintings by F Cannan)**

craftspeople, or been home-made, or been stolen, though certain items such as sword-blades and guns would have been shipped in from abroad and sold in Irish harbour towns. In the towns, the kern was a bogey-man and an outsider, yet it was through these arteries of foreign trade that much weaponry and armour reached Irish soldiers. Not all these shipments were legal; quantities of equipment were smuggled to the king's 'Irish enemies' from abroad.

Whenever they could lay their hands on them, kern appear to have used guns with a real enthusiasm for all things new and warlike, Stanihurst describing the typical 'kerne' of his day as 'an ordinarie soldier, using for weapon his sword and target, and sometimes his peece [i.e. firearm]'. Even so, the bow continued to be used long after the advent of firearms, and to prove its worth, into the 17th century. More hunting than battlefield weapons, the Irish bow was a shorter weapon than the terrifying English longbow; Spenser writes of the 'short bowes, and little quivers with short bearded arrowes' which Irishmen used.

Spenser gives a very valuable description of these bows, noting this kind of short bow 'are at this day to bee seene commonly amongst the Northerne Irish-Scots, whose Scottish bowes are not

past three quarters of a yard long, with a string of wreathed hempe slackely bent, and whose arrowes are not much above halfe an ell long, tipped with Steele heads, made like common broad arrow heades, but much more sharpe and slender, that they enter into a man or horse most cruelly, notwithstanding that they are shot forth weakely.'

Kern were evidently proficient sharpshooters but their style of fighting did not, until O'Neill's reforms, lend itself to firing in ordered volleys. Rather, every man took careful aim at whichever target he chose to, an expression of the fact that, though formidable warriors in their own right, the military ideal in medieval Ireland (and Scotland) tended towards the individual champion rather than solid team-player.

### Saffron shirt

A coarse tunic, often saffron-coloured during the Tudor period, was the kern's usual basic garment. For the mighty saffron shirt or *lèine croich*, an Irish nobleman would apparently use a pinch of real saffron (an expensive spice only grown during the Middle Ages in the Middle East and Moorish Spain, and France from the 16th century) to colour his shirt a rich golden colour. Completing

the kern's dress was a shaggy mantle or cloak (*brat*) and, certainly in the 16th century, a short embroidered jacket. Clothing and arms were often one and the same for the kern, given that a kern, out of regard for his own pride and safety, would be armed at all times. Likewise, a kern's day-time cloak became his night-time bedding, and we hear from Derricke of Irishmen having 'mantles down unto the shoe, to lap them in by night' combined with 'spears and swords and little darts to shield them from despite.'

The English did not consider this a dapper ensemble. In particular, paranoid Englishmen like Spenser were convinced that the long and bushy hair Irishmen grew with shaggy fringes or 'glibs' were a means of 'monstrously disguising' rebellious faces and identities. The 'glib' was associated with Gaelic unruliness, and colonial officials in Ireland decided it was something that needed legislating against. As always, English attempts to ban the 'glib', the saffron shirt and other cornerstones of Gaelic cultural identity proved a waste of ink. In reality, the 'glib' was certainly not a universally adopted fashion among Irishmen. Nor was it always really a 'style'; as often as not it was probably merely a thick mass of unwashed curls, as wild and disorderly as





**Bunratty Castle in County Clare was possessed by the Macnamaras. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Republic of Ireland)**

the man it 'disguised'.

Agile and swift-footed, the 'skipping kerns' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*) opted to rely on speed and surprise rather than bodily defence. Armour only hampered the kern's frenetic style of attack – or as Spenser put it, 'their confused kinde of march... without any order or array, their clashing of swords together, their fierce running upon their enemies'. Indeed, when it came to battle, kern would make a sudden rush on the enemy, bellowing their war-cries, pitching their darts, war-pipes blaring, before setting to work with broad-edged swords, axes and long, murderous daggers. If the enemy held his ground or was able to offer much missile fire, the kern's effectiveness was liable to wane, at which point the Irishmen would, to quote an interview with an English soldier set down by Jean Froissart, 'scatter and take cover in thickets and bushes and under the ground. So they disappear and it is impossible to know where they have gone to.'

Principally irregular skirmishers rather than field infantrymen, kern had limited staying power in the face of missile fire or sustained assault. For this reason it was, says Camden's *Britannia*, the heavily-armed, axe-wielding galloglass who were commonly 'set in the rearguard', providing

much needed ballast to the darting waves of kern and horsemen. Even so, Rich, though conceding in his *Short Survey of Ireland* (1609) that he was 'better practised in my pike than in my pen', took a dim view of the galloglass' ability to 'endure an encounter of Pikes, yet the Irish do make great account of them.' Rich, an angry, insightful and playful writer, exaggerates here, but it is certainly true that the three basic pillars of the pre-Plantation Irish military establishment – horsemen, galloglass and kern – were no longer in their prime by the last two or so decades of the 1500s.

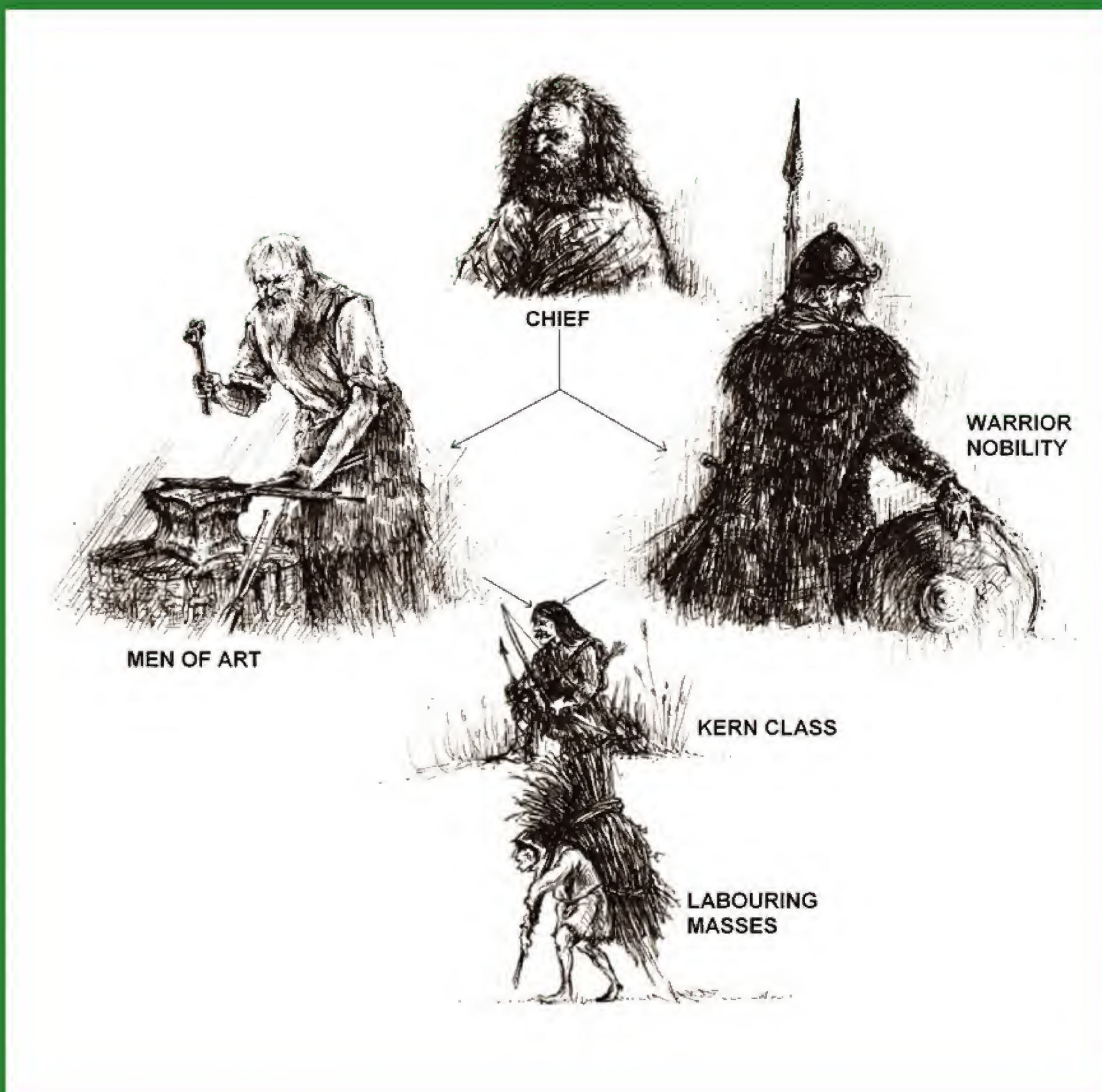
Until that time, however, the *ceithearnach* was invariably first-rate when it came to ambushes, raiding, reconnaissance and the dark arts of inter-clan warfare. And when the mood was right, there were occasions when kern showed themselves to be fanatically determined troopers. The 'Carnage of Clare' (c1278) praises the kern of Maccon MacNamara who fought to the last against great odds after being deserted by their Anglo-Norman allies. MacNamara had also fled but his kern quickly elected a new commander from among their number and 'devoted themselves to giving and taking hurt; they made incredible slaughter of the enemy'.

## Guerrilla Operations

Nevertheless, it was with irregular operations in the countryside that kern really came into their own, acting as mobile skirmishers and scouts around the centre-piece rearguard or vanguard of galloglass, and attacking lines of horsemen. Froissart recounts the experiences of an Englishman who had been ambushed by rebels in Ireland, telling how the Irish 'sprang out at us and began to hurl their javelins, while the archers on our side shot back at them. The Irish could not stand our fire, for their armour is very simple, and they retreated.'

Such hit-and-run tactics rendered largely Ireland ungovernable until the 17th century. The English were quick to recognise the kern's abilities as a scout and his potential as a counter-insurgency specialist – as a skilled guerrilla fighter, the kern was precisely what the English needed, paradoxically, to pacify Ireland. For a long time there was no shortage of 'rough rug-headed kerns, Which live like venom', as Shakespeare describes them in *Richard II*, who were prepared to throw in their lot with the English Lord Deputy. Plunder, the cheap thrill of power over others, and an opportunity for settling old scores with local rivals was enough to persuade many kern to work for the





The structure of Gaelic society.  
(Drawing by F Cannan)



Modern recreation of a Kern warrior.  
His only armour is made of leather.

English – but only for a while.

The records of the English Privy Council for 1550 contain the most remarkable entry: ‘To paie the waiges of the Kerne being at Chester and at London.’ England was always in need of soldiers, whether to fight in Scotland, France and, of course, in Ireland. And so, just as those titans of the mercenary profession the MacSweeneys and MacDonnells led, with other Scots, bands of mercenary galloglass on a hereditary basis, so the enterprising Keating family did the same for the supply of kern.

Descended from Norman adventurers, the Keatings were followers of Gerald Fitzgerald, 8th Earl of Kildare, the magnificently errant Lord Deputy (chief governor) of Ireland and uncrowned master of the English king’s dominium Hiberniae. But when the 9th Earl fell out with Henry VIII, the Keatings, who claimed common descent with the Fitzgeralds, were, along with Kildare’s MacDonnell galloglass, hired

by the Crown on a more direct, formalised basis. Amid the usual double-dealing and baffling webs of factional allegiances, William Keating was ‘captain of the King’s kern’ to Henry VIII; in the 1560s ‘Kittyn kern’ traversed Ulster’s bogs hunting for Shane O’Neill; in 1577 two dozen ‘kerne of the sept of the Keatings’ served under the command of one Robert Harpoll; in 1588 the Crown paid Redmond Keating 16 pence a day for his services as captain of 16 kern.

There were, too, some well-known English officers of kern during this period, such as Francis Cosby, ‘General of her Majesty’s kerne’ from 1558. Somewhat ironically, the most famous kern of the 16th century was also an Englishman: this was Thomas Lee, Elizabeth I’s ‘Captain General’ of kern and a real Kurtz-like figure who devoted his life to violence and anarchy. Lee went native only to discover he was unable to find his way back to English ways. His death, like his life, was nasty and unpleasant; but away from the

towns, there was always room in Ireland’s anarchic hinterland for a self-made warlord like Lee the ‘bog soldier’ to find the kind of lawless existence his restless soul hankered after.

### Now Rebels

The alliance between some kern and the English Crown did not last. Like dunes of sand shifting in the wind, alliances rarely lasted, and few treaties were sacred or oaths permanently binding. The more powerful nobles and the galloglass employed a level of guile and cunning that the kern’s inferior social status rarely permitted. The kern was, inevitably, a belligerent follower rather than a leader; where his leader took him he could only follow. Appropriately, to this day in Ireland a pawn on the chess board is called a ‘kern’. Pawn he may have been, the kern would nevertheless outlast the more vaunted galloglass as a troop-type. Thomas Gainsford, the ever adventurous





**Mobilised to action by the call of his lord, this reconstructed peasant farmer is armed and equipped in a makeshift, homespun manner, yet ready all the same to defend his farmstead (Drawing by F Cannan)**

‘Captain Pamphlet’ and veteran of Kinsale, remarked in 1618 that while the galloglass were ‘in a manner extinct’, the kern as a type of a soldier were still ‘in great reputation’, serving in revolts and ‘proving sufficient souldiers, but excellent for skirmish.’

Though many kern were prepared to work for anyone with gold and cattle to share with them, many, many more harboured an ideal of an Ireland free of English rule – or at least an Ireland free from English interference. When revolt swept Ireland in the late 16th century, Keatings were among the insurgents, a report of the period describing the ‘Ketings’ Kerne’ as ‘ill-disposed, and now rebels’. Freedom from rule by an English monarch was as yet a more abstract, less potent, rallying call than the opportunity to settle purely local scores with local rivals. And yet, popular resentment grew steadily throughout the 16th century – especially during the reign of Elizabeth, a

ruler who excited the Irish magnates to a new pitch of indignation, even if many simultaneously sought her recognition and protection of their titles and privileges. Late in the 16th century it was alleged that the rebel chieftain Sir Brian O’Rourke had made an effigy of Elizabeth, which he instructed his galloglass to attack with their axes, before tying the said figure to a horse’s tail so that it could be dragged along the ground!

As tensions increased, something dramatic happened to the kern: Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, turned them into a modern force of pike, musket and ‘targeteers’ (swordsmen used to exploit gaps in the enemy’s lines). Fynes Moryson, secretary to Elizabeth I’s Lord Deputy, noticed how the Irish had suddenly ‘growne skillful’, meaning they had begun to fight like the English with musket and pike. Instead of relying on hit-and-run tactics, the kern would now fight in ordered units – was this the end of the

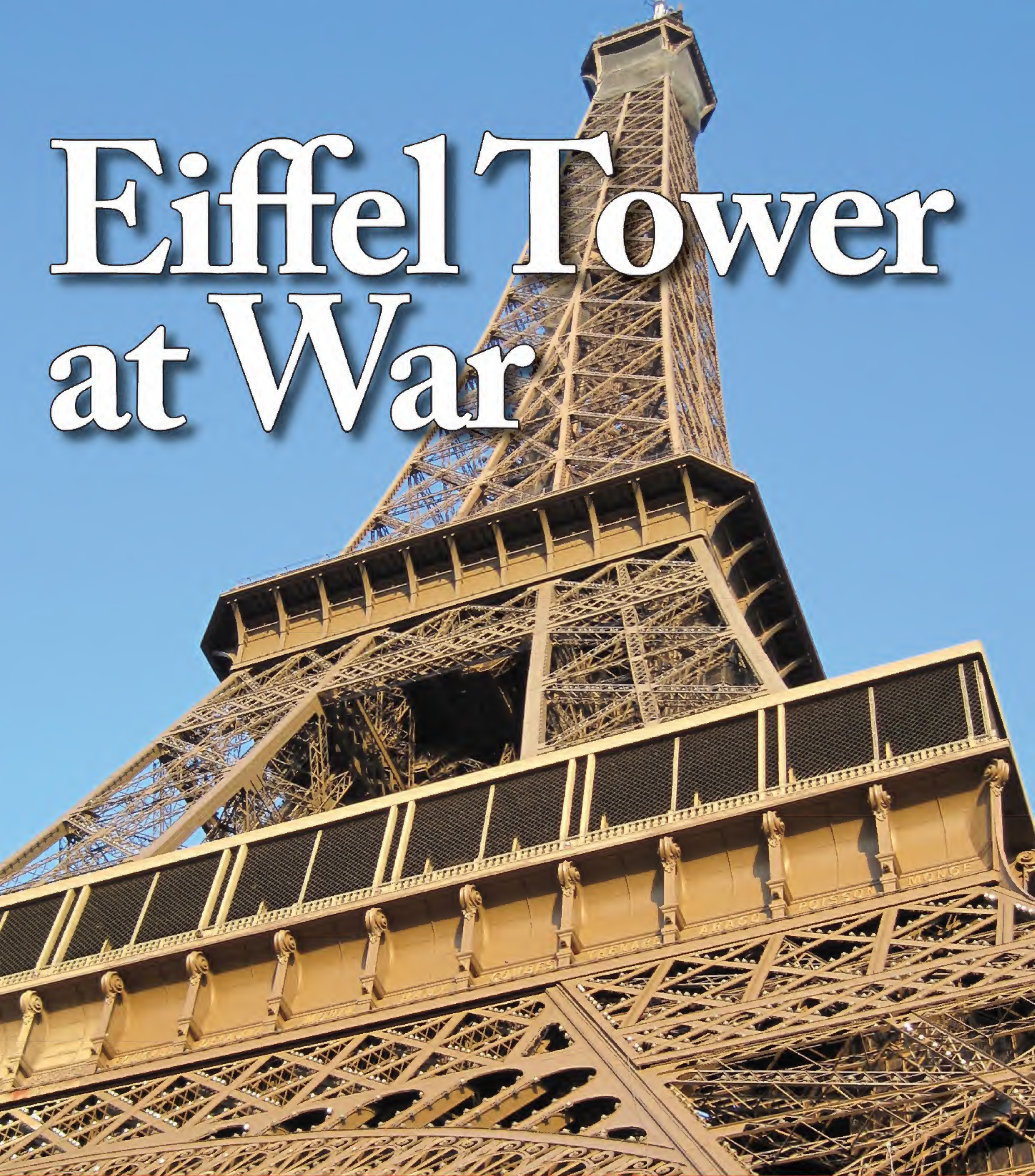
traditional kern? For a while O’Neill’s reforms seemed to yield miracles. At the Yellow Ford in 1598, a well-drilled army of Irish resistors beat a large English force under Sir Henry Bagenal. It was a stunning moment in Irish military history. But the victory proved temporary and O’Neill and O’Donnell’s rebellion was crushed, and the old Ireland of kern, galloglass and horsemen came steadily tumbling down in during the years that followed.

The kern had been an integral part of Gaelic military organization and the English were desperate to eliminate them from Ireland. The fact that it was their chiefs who had led them into revolt was not enough – the kern would be punished as severely as their masters. As early as the rising of Shane O’Neill (killed by Scots in 1567), the English government had considered the question of the extent ordinary kern and galloglass could be blamed for rebellions started by their feudal overlords. Their judgement was apocalyptic: it was a rebellion of all the people of the country; and so ‘the rebellion of the whole made a forfeiture of the whole.’

Many, many kern died resisting the spread of English rule, so many that at the close of the 1500s Payne was able to say that ‘most of that sorte were slayne in the late warres’. Some survived the desolation; Redmond Keating was persuaded to make his peace with the Lord Deputy in 1600 after the latter ‘burned and spoiled’ his lands. Catholics of the ‘Old English’ variety, Keating came out for James II in the revolution of 1688, after which a branch emigrated to that continental enclave of Celtic civilization, Brittany.

But at every opportunity the kern would rise again in rebellion. Long after the Flight of the Earls in 1607, insurrection still lurked in every bush and bog. As one rising ended another began; however dismal and unpromising the odds, kern were still at the forefront of every fresh insurgency. Cromwellian soldiers stationed in Ireland in 1647 complained that their bellies were without food and their equipment in tatters, blaming the ‘Kernes’ who had rendered the country virtually uninhabitable by torching the cornfields and destroying ‘all fit for succour’. Come 1700, the English (but Catholic and pro-Jacobite) poet and playwright John Dryden was writing of Hibernia lying ‘prostrate... The sturdy kerns in due subjection stand.’ But for many kern, proud and unflinching to the end, a barren, wasted land was preferable to a defeated, prostrate land. Their plight was not one to be envied •





# Eiffel Tower at War

Few of the millions of tourists who visit the Eiffel Tower each year realise what a vital role this French icon played in two world wars. ANDREW UFFINDELL uncovers its remarkable story.



**E**legant, peaceful, and a seemingly permanent fixture on the Paris skyline, the Eiffel Tower gives little hint of its tumultuous past. Yet for all its apparent unsuitability for anything other than a sedate role, it has been a powerful weapon of war, and much of its life has been bound up in conflict.

Designed by a team under Gustave Eiffel, one of the most outstanding engineers of his time, the Tower was built for the 1889 World Fair, and, at a height of more than 300 metres, remained the world's tallest building until 1929. Today, it is almost universally known and loved, yet this was not always so. Incredibly, Eiffel's masterpiece took years to win the hearts of the Parisians, and had to endure a barrage of criticism. The Tower, it was claimed, was ugly, pointless, and even downright dangerous.

To this hostility, Eiffel responded with a public relations campaign, setting out the practical uses of his Tower. Significantly, the very first benefit he listed was not its potential as a platform for making meteorological measurements, nor for observing the stars from the purer air at high altitude. Instead, its prime importance on Eiffel's list was as a military observation post. From the very start, his Tower was intended to play an active role in the event of a war.

### Pioneering experiments

This was hardly surprising, since less than two decades had passed since the traumatic, four-month siege of Paris by the Germans in 1870-1871. The Tower would offer obvious advantages if the city were ever encircled again. Unrivalled as an observatory, it would enable the defenders to see for up to 40 miles, and to use an optical telegraph to maintain communications with both the capital's ring of forts and the unoccupied rump of the country. Nor was the Tower as easy a target for enemy gunners as might be thought, being more difficult to hit than a solid, conventional building of the same height. Mostly just a slender, tapering neck, even its base consisted largely of empty spaces, as a result of graceful arches and a network of metal girders. Just 7,000 tonnes of iron were used to build it, a minimal amount considering its sheer size. In fact, if it was scaled down to a height of 30 cm, it would weigh a mere seven grams, little more than a sheet of A4 paper.

In theory, the Tower was due for demolition a mere 20 years after being built for the World Fair, but Gustave Eiffel astutely realised that it was likely to be

preserved for longer if he promoted its unique benefits as a scientific laboratory. He personally conducted numerous experiments, using an office at the top of the Tower, and his work on air resistance proved particularly important because of its potential application in designing aircraft and hangars, and in ballistics research. Later, during World War One, the Tower would be used for testing aircraft engines, and the information it helped glean into how windspeed varied with altitude and time of day would be of obvious importance in deciding when best to send out aircraft on a mission.

Crucially, Eiffel also made his Tower available for pioneering experiments in wireless telegraphy (or radio). In 1898, Eugène Ducretet established contact between the Tower and the Panthéon, a distance of 2.5 miles over the roof-tops of Paris. The rate of progress in this field was staggering. In 1899, Guglielmo Marconi sent a radio message across the English Channel, and by 1902 was doing so across the Atlantic Ocean.

The implications were immense. Despite its obvious benefits, wireless telegraphy could be a threat if left to be developed exclusively by a hostile power. In December 1903, Eiffel offered the use of his Tower for experiments by the Department of Military Telegraphy. A handful of military engineers, under the direction of Captain (later General) Gustave Ferrié, began work at the Tower. By 1905, they could guarantee communications with the fortresses on France's eastern frontiers, irrespective of the weather, and they progressively extended the range. The key advantage of using the Tower was that, unlike a balloon, it was invulnerable to the wind. With the science still in its infancy, the French government baulked at the cost of purpose-built pylons, but the Eiffel Tower was not only free but already in place.

At first, Ferrié's wireless telegraph post was no more than a shed near the Tower's base, and the antenna consisted of a wire that stretched through the air to the third and highest floor. But the improvised post was slowly developed into something more impressive, and the number of wires constituting the antenna was gradually increased. In January 1906, negotiations for a properly-equipped station began between the Ministry of War, the City of Paris, and the company that managed the Tower. The final agreement, reached more than two years later, was for a permanent, underground post to be installed out of sight beneath the Champ-de-Mars, the park on which the Tower stood. Ironically, the new

station had barely been completed when the Seine river burst its banks in January 1910, making expensive repairs necessary.

### War breaks out

Great strides had been made, but the outbreak of war in 1914 dramatically accelerated progress. This was not, in fact, the first time the Eiffel Tower had taken part in military operations. In 1908, during the campaigning in Morocco, it had communicated with a French cruiser anchored in the Mediterranean, and with wireless posts near Casablanca and Fez. But this new, global war was on a different scale altogether.

On 25 July, the Minister of War learned that the only means for France to communicate rapidly with her Russian allies, given the impossibility of using the electric telegraph lines controlled by the Central Powers, was by wireless telegraph



**Monument to General Ferrié, Department of Military Telegraphy, in the Champ-de-Mars near the base of the Eiffel Tower.**

from the Eiffel Tower. Even then, the distance to the Russian post at the city of Bobruisk was so great relative to the power of the transmitters that the link was sometimes unreliable. As a result, it was decided to build a powerful new radio station at the city of Lyon, and this supplementary post was operational just two months later, by the end of September.

The Lyon station had the added advantage of being a safe distance from the German frontier, unlike the Eiffel Tower. In August, the Tower had been requisitioned by the Ministry of War by virtue of a contingency clause in the agreement signed back in 1887 when it was built. Security measures were hurriedly





**Searchlights mounted on the roof of a building in the place de la Concorde. Paris repeatedly came under air attack during World War One.**

put in place, for the Tower was an obvious target for bombs, spies, or sabotage.

Faced with the relentless sweep of the German armies through northern France, a siege of Paris looked increasingly likely, and this made it necessary to find a new wireless telegraph post for the Tower, one that was deeper and better protected from heavy artillery shells. The most obvious answer was the métro system. Two lines crossed at the Trocadéro station, just over the Seine from the Tower, and the deeper of the two lay as much as nine metres underground, and was not yet used by trains. It became the new base, and the antennae were run right over the river to the top of the Tower.

Approval for the new post was granted on 1 September. Work began on the 2nd, and continued non-stop—just 11 days later, the post was in use. Air shafts were made, ventilators installed, and thick walls added to limit the effect of shell or bomb blasts. Sufficient stocks of oil and petrol would enable the post to function throughout a siege, and an escape route was prepared through an underground quarry to the Bois de Boulogne, over 1.25 miles to the west, in case evacuation

became necessary. It was all a far cry from the ramshackle sheds that had constituted the Tower's initial post a decade earlier.

The Tower not only transmitted and received wireless messages, but also intercepted enemy ones. Various claims were later made about the Tower's contribution to winning the battle of the Marne, but were often exaggerated. It is clear that the messages it intercepted were important in helping to form an overall picture of the situation, and for deciding certain tactical moves, but were not decisive in themselves. Nor was the Tower France's only listening post during the war. Indeed, it was vital to have several, distributed over a wide area, in case a storm interfered with communications. A whole network of them was established outside Paris, the idea being that any hostile wireless station could constantly be monitored by at least two posts. Additional networks were based on the cities of Lyon and Bordeaux. Indeed, the Tower was less important at the war's end than at the start. Its location in the heart of a great city made it difficult to protect, and more efficient, purpose-built pylons could now be readily constructed.

Nonetheless, the sheer volume of the Tower's work commands attention. During the war, it transmitted or received a staggering estimate of 50 million words. It intercepted not just military communications, but diplomatic and commercial messages, and made possible the seizure of contraband imported on ships for hostile powers. Besides issuing communiqués designed to counter German propaganda, it broadcast regular time signals, which enabled wireless stations in the field to take the correct time, even far away on the Eastern Front. The number of men who worked at the Eiffel Tower post rose from about 20 immediately before the war, to around 500 by the end, and they included some brilliant scientists such as Louis-Victor de Broglie, who would win the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1929.

Even in the midst of all this activity, the Tower was still used for scientific experiments, and witnessed an historic breakthrough in the use of radio to transmit a human voice, rather than simply the dots and dashes of the Morse code. In October 1915, words broadcast from Arlington, outside Washington DC, were heard simultaneously at both the





**'Papa' Joffre, the victor of the battle of the Marne in September 1914. He was made a Marshal of France in 1916.**



**The Eiffel Tower at the start of World War One. Radio antenna wires stretch up to the third floor.**



**View from the third floor of the Tower, looking south-east. The large building at the end of the lawns of the Champ-de-Mars is the Ecole militaire—the Military School.**

Eiffel Tower and Honolulu in Hawaii. The wartime progress made in this field had an important side-effect, by making possible the launch of civilian radio broadcasts soon afterwards. In fact, the Eiffel Tower's own radio station started up as early as December 1921.

### **Conquered heart of Paris**

The Tower did not work in silence. It could be heard by the people of Paris, for the quietness near the Champ-de-Mars would be abruptly broken by a burst of wireless messages. 'The Eiffel Tower talks – you can hear its crackling, explosive speech as you go by,' explained a British newspaper correspondent in July 1915. The audibility of the Tower was a reminder of its share in the war effort, and helped transform popular attitudes. Ever since it had been built a quarter-of-a-century earlier, the Tower had been criticised. 'Prodigiously pointless,' was how one commentator, André Hallays, condemned it in 1894. 'This monument was bolted together solely to stupefy passers-by,' he sneered. 'Neither the observatory of the final floor, nor the cabarets of the first, prevent this great piece of metal scaffolding... from being the most hideous thing in the world.'

Yet compare Hallays' bitter sarcasm with the warm, affectionate words of Maurice Demaison in a newspaper, the *Journal des débats*, three-and-a-half months into the war. 'We discover a strange, new charm in this Tower that

has been so disparaged,' Demaison wrote, as he reflected how its services were generating a sense of gratitude. 'We already used to admire the might of her arches, and in the mist of a November evening the web of her [iron] framework becomes as exquisite as filigree. High above her summit, from which the flag is proudly flapping, a biplane wheels in the sky. We recall how the Germans swore to destroy her, how she was the first target issued to their Taubes [airplanes], and we are glad to know she is still standing and talking with the Russians. She belongs now to the history of Paris.'

But perhaps the transformation in public opinion was put most eloquently of all by the writer Jean Richepin, one of the intelligentsia who had previously been so scornful of the Tower. In November 1914, he set his thoughts down on paper. Before the war, he wrote, 'she had seemed an insolent eyesore – just an outsized trinket that looked decidedly odd to Parisians more comfortable with the familiar, stone architecture of buildings such as Notre-Dame Cathedral.' Yet now, in wartime, the Tower was winning people over. Richepin described how he had recently been returning home one evening. It was a freezing, pitch-black night. 'Suddenly, on my left, in the dark, frozen, starless sky, I heard a high, clear, calm voice that seemed to fling out luminous words. They flew away with crackling noises, as if from a sun bursting into broken rays, or as if the folds of a flag were being transformed into

birds flapping their wings.'

The sounds came from the Tower. Richepin felt electrified, and at one with it. 'Naturally I was not able to decipher your words,' he wrote, as if talking to it, 'nor did I know how to, yet I was intoxicated by my awareness of them, which penetrated right into my innermost core, into the very marrow of my bones, and which would have penetrated any Parisian like me, since it was of us and for us that you were speaking – of France and for France. ... You have conquered, fully and irrevocably, the heart of Paris, the heart of France, and the heart of the world.'

### **Well guarded**

The Tower's fame and importance caused the authorities to take strict precautions. 'The Tower is well guarded,' noted a journalist towards the end of 1914. 'A vast fence keeps back the inquisitive, and park benches, lined up end to end, form a second line of defence should it be required. Sentries with fixed bayonets pass to and fro in the gap between these two lines.'

Captain Alphonse Grasset of the 103rd Infantry Regiment was entrusted at the beginning of August 1914 with inspecting a post stationed high up in the Tower. He found it a memorable experience. 'Shall I admit that I had lived in Paris for five years, without ever having gone up the 300-odd metres of this structure, which, even if its utility was incontestable, did not look very attractive? Today, my duty obliged me to make the pilgrimage, and



I carried it out with good grace, taking my place in the lift, along with a relief squad. Some infantrymen and gunners were up there, with machine-guns and small artillery pieces, watching out for the approach of any Taubes or Zeppelins. I began to hope that these good people would never have to use their weapons, since their bullets and shells would fall somewhere in the immense mass of houses and monuments that unfolded at our feet, and would certainly wreck havoc there.'

Looking down, Grasset could see some cuirassiers leaving the Ecole militaire (Military School). 'They were small, very small, but very impressive all the same. These tiny horsemen were leaving for the threatened frontier, many of them never to return, and as they passed by, you could distinguish the extremely small heads of people removing their hats.' He knew that on the ground it was a hot, summer's day, yet amidst the gusts of wind high up in the sky he found it uncomfortably cold. 'The unfortunate men who were called to mount guard vigilantly here during the night were carefully muffled up, and asked for extra coverings. As for me, I was not equipped for a polar expedition, and had nothing more to do up at these heights, so I hurriedly descended to avoid catching a cold.'

Yet the more immediate threat came not from the air, but from espionage – or so it seemed. As early as 15 August 1914, a young French reservist, Corporal Paul-Eugène Gruault, was condemned to death by a court-martial. It emerged that he had tried to sell the Germans information about both the wireless telegraph station of the Eiffel Tower and an aerodrome. He had previously been working as an accountant, but had lived beyond his means and defrauded a jeweller to fund his lifestyle.

Given a suspended sentence, Gruault found himself unable to obtain another job because of his criminal record. Instead, he decided to contact German intelligence, and did so by writing to a newspaper, the *Kölnische Zeitung*, suggesting that he had important information for sale. Ironically, the paper failed to grasp the purport of his letter, and simply forwarded it to the Parisian advertising agency that represented it in France. The agency naturally contacted the security services, and a detective turned up on Gruault's doorstep, pretending to be a German agent. Gruault handed over a report, and was promptly arrested.

The information in Gruault's report was negligible in value, and if he had managed to sell it, he would actually have been serving his country by swindling the German intelligence services out of

some money. Yet because hostilities had broken out just days after he had written to the *Kölnische Zeitung*, he suddenly found himself in the altogether more serious situation of being accused of betraying his country when she was at war. Nonetheless, the ludicrous aspects of Gruault's case were obvious, even in the feverish atmosphere of those opening weeks of August 1914. Luckily, he also had a capable lawyer, and his punishment was commuted to life imprisonment. On 26 September, he was formally degraded in the courtyard of the Ecole militaire in Paris, and was then sent to the notorious penal colony of Devil's Island, off the South American coast.

The postscript to this story is even more fantastic, and is related in Joseph Kessel's *Ami, entends-tu* (2006) and Roger Grenier's *Instantanés* (2007). A

decade after the end of the war, Gruault was pardoned following a campaign by, amongst others, a journalist working for a newssheet called the *Détective*. On his return to France, he turned up at the offices of the *Détective*, thanked the director for the help in securing his release, and asked for a job. He was duly appointed an accountant, and had such a successful career that he ended up in charge of the accounts of the entire publishing house of Gaston Gallimard. It was a spectacular outcome for a one-time fraudster, but he never wholly shook off his past. One day, a colleague played a practical joke, by slipping into his office and hiding the safe while he was out, leaving Gruault visibly terrified that with his background he would be the very first to be accused of theft.



**Adolf Hitler poses triumphantly before the Eiffel Tower in 1940.**





**Corporal Gruault under arrest, the luckless spy who tried to sell the Germans secret information about the Eiffel Tower's wireless telegraph post.**

## Under attack

Ironically, Paris had never seemed so beautiful than during those sunny days of August 1914, with the streets empty and free of petrol fumes as a result of the mobilisation. Life seemed all the more intense in the face of the nation's danger. At night, Paris became a dreamlike city, with her lighting reduced to save gas and guard against air attack. Overhead swept the beams of searchlights, like gleaming, silver swords restlessly probing the night sky. Two of them were mounted on the Eiffel Tower itself.

The first air raid on Paris came on 30 August. A two-seater monoplane known as a Taube dropped five bombs, accompanied by a written message. 'The German army is at the gates of Paris,' it read. 'You have nothing left but to surrender.' Aerial bombardment was

far from a new experience. As long ago as 1849, during the siege of Venice, the Austrians had attempted to send scores of small balloons, loaded with bombs, against the city. Airplanes were first used to try and bomb an enemy – or least drop grenades on him – by an Italian pilot fighting the Ottoman Turks in Libya in 1911. They were used again for bombing during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), during the Mexican Revolution, and by the French themselves in Morocco earlier in 1914. The Belgian cities of Liège and Antwerp were both attacked by Zeppelins in August.

Yet the raid on Paris was significant, since the minimal numbers of casualties could not hide the fact that the civilian population was deliberately targeted for terror bombing. Even so, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 left

the legality of such attacks open to interpretation, and the Germans could rightly point out that Paris was a defended city, not to mention a supply and transport hub for the French army. The Eiffel Tower was indisputably a legitimate target, for even if it was 'dedicated to science' – or regarded, at the age of 25, as an 'historic monument' – such objections were negated by the fact it was being used for military purposes at the time of the attack.

Paris was surprisingly vulnerable from above, her system of air defence having been hurriedly improvised. Fortunately, the aircraft bombs of 1914 were puny, and aiming techniques primitive. The chances of the Tower actually being hit by a bomb were minimal, unless the Germans risked a low-level attack. To ward off just such a strike, machine-guns were placed on the third and highest floor. Even light artillery pieces were installed on the Tower—engineers were seen hoisting them up among the girders, and clamping them down high overhead.

The Tower also proved a useful platform from which to obtain early warning of approaching aircraft. The method of detection turned out to be a remarkably simple one—parrots. The birds have excellent hearing – in fact, so excellent that they have a distressing tendency to pick up words uttered in adjoining rooms that their unsuspecting owners would rather not have repeated. It proved a precious ability in wartime, for parrots stationed on the Eiffel Tower were able to detect the noise of distant engines, at a time when the hostile aircraft were still out of sight and inaudible to human observers.

Following the initial German raid on 30 August, a further one occurred on each of the next three days. Curiosity seemed to be the dominant reaction of the Parisians. Many looked forward to the increasingly regular German visits, and learned to expect them in the afternoon – 'bombing time', or 'Taube time', as they dubbed it. Eagerly, they sought out a spot on any open space that offered a wide view of the sky, unblocked by nearby buildings. On the hill of Montmartre, a wine merchant even organised a stand overlooking a vast swathe of the city, and hired out seats and field-glasses as if for a show.

Eric Fisher Wood, an attaché at the US Embassy, was particularly thrilled by the raid on 2 September. The Taube passed almost directly overhead, at an altitude of about 5,000 feet, so high that it looked like a bug crawling across the sky. Through binoculars, it was possible to make out the black, Maltese cross under each wing, and the German aviator looking down on



the city. Sailing over the Eiffel Tower, the airplane dropped a bomb, which could be seen descending as a tiny speck. After what seemed an inordinately long time, there came a faint, muffled boom as the bomb exploded near the Tower. Meanwhile, the guns on the Tower were making an extraordinary din, but without any effect; the Taube veered round, dropped another bomb on to the roof of a house, and then flew away to the north over Montmartre.

What was it like to fly over the city? A French airman called Renaud de la Frégeolière did just that at the start of the battle of the Marne. He was an observer in an airplane that took off on the afternoon of 5 September from an airfield south-west of Paris, for a mission on the other side. He flew over the city, which looked dark and gloomy amid the smoke and haze. Far below, the streets formed gigantic spiders' webs. Renaud noted how the Eiffel Tower looked no height at all, and admired the white sparkle of the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur perched on the top of Montmartre. His airplane flew on, and carried out a reconnaissance over the region of Meaux, just 25 miles east of the city, where the French 6th Army had begun a counter-offensive into the German flank.

Renaud could see exploding shells piercing the evening gloom, and knew that men were dying down there. It was a striking contrast to the area further west, the heart of France, still free from German invaders. 'Behind us, the capital seemed to catch fire in the blaze of the setting sun,' he wrote. 'Did it not look as if a massive conflagration was consuming the city, and smothering it under a sea of red haze?' The glass roof of one of the railway stations reflected the light like an immense mirror, and Montmartre was a rosy crimson. 'The domes of the Panthéon and the Invalides were a glittering gold, while the Eiffel Tower burst out of the furnace, and stood proudly in the twilight like a great sword of red-hot iron.'

### Guardian of France

On 2 September, as the Germans neared Paris, the new military governor, General Joseph Gallieni, asked the Minister of War whether or not the city was to be held. The Minister replied that it was to be defended à outrance ('to the bitter end'), and so Gallieni issued orders to prepare to resist the Germans every step of the way, destroying roads, bridges, railway tunnels, supplies, and anything else that might be of use to them. Preparations were made to blow up the wireless station at the Eiffel Tower in case that became necessary, and the Tower itself may well have shared its fate if the German

tide had not been turned back.

As early as 5 September, the Tower could be seen in the distance from the western wing of the German advance. To many footsore soldiers, it became an enticing symbol of a city that lay just out of their grasp. Lieutenant Weisse of the 26th Infantry Regiment was barely 40 miles east of Paris, and later recalled how cheerful the troops had been. 'We saw the Eiffel Tower,' he explained, 'and believed we were near to achieving our dream of victory.'

Similarly, the padre of the Guard Cavalry Division recalled how, on the morning of 7 September, with the battle of the Marne now fully underway, 'many a man already craned his neck and kept a lookout for the tip of the Eiffel Tower.' But two days later, the German armies near the capital suddenly received orders to retreat. No longer did the Eiffel Tower beckon the soldiers towards the city's pleasures, and instead seemed to mock their failure. For some, it became a symbol at which to vent their frustration. That evening, Major Bender of the 74th Field Artillery Regiment took up a position at May-en-Multien, nearly 35 miles north-east of Paris. 'In the twilight, we saw the tip of the Eiffel Tower sticking up over the clouds in the west,' he recalled, and then added ruefully 'how we would have liked to have sent her a shell to say goodnight!'

Even after the German retreat from the

Marne, several of their frontline soldiers in the trenches could still see the Tower. In 1916, Herbert Sulzbach was near Noyon, 60 miles from the city, in some of the most advanced positions, and could identify the Tower through a stereotelescope. Two years later, as the Germans made dramatic advances in their 1918 offensives, Paris again came under imminent threat, for the first time in nearly four years. In case the city did fall, along with the Eiffel Tower, an alternative wireless post was set up at Saint-Pierres-des-Corps, on the outskirts of Tours, 125 miles south-west of the city, and new eavesdropping centres were established even further away at Poitiers and Caen.

At the same time, the Eiffel Tower continued to fulfil more basic and traditional roles. Not the least of these was serving as the city's highest flagpole. On 22 April 1917, just weeks after the United States entered the war, the Stars and Stripes were flown from the Tower, and honoured with a 21 gun salute. At the end of the war, some embittered Frenchmen even wanted to use the Tower as an executioner's scaffold. When asked immediately after the armistice what should be done with Kaiser Wilhelm II, a young corporal replied: 'I would hang [him] from the Eiffel Tower if it rested with me. One of my brothers is dead and another is blind. Can anything ever pay for that?'



Base of the Tower, looking north-west across the Champ-de-Mars from near the site of the underground wireless telegraph post. General Ferrié's monument stands amidst the trees on the far left.





The Tower had helped steady morale in the wartime capital. It was a reassuring presence, partly because of its highly visible searchlights. In September 1914, Anne Rittenhouse, a correspondent for the New York Times, reported on the strange appearance of Paris at night. 'This is fiction come true,' she wrote, finding the searchlights comforting. 'You, in your safe tranquil homes cannot know the pleasure it gives to look out of the window in the wakeful nights and watch those wheeling comets circling, circling to catch the Zeppelin that may come.' She knew, too, that the Tower was armed with machine-guns, and was sending vital wireless messages. 'Strange, isn't it,' she mused, 'that the plaything of a nation has become its safeguard?'

For all its practical applications, the Eiffel Tower was equally important as an emblem. At the beginning of September 1914, the French government temporarily left Paris for the safety of the provinces, along with much of the population. But the Tower remained, along with those inhabitants who were unable or unwilling to leave, not least those who were too poor to do so. Small wonder, then, that it became a symbol of resistance to the German invasion. Simply by surviving the war, it epitomised the capital's defiance. 'I think the Tower's greatest achievement... was in standing where it did,' noted a British newspaper, The Observer, in

April 1919. 'The Germans, with their childish delight in the destructive and the spectacular, could never have resisted the temptation to bring it down with a crash.'

When built, the Tower had been intended as no more than a transient structure, but Eiffel had secured a renewal of his lease in 1910 by establishing its importance as a scientific laboratory, and the war automatically prolonged the agreement even longer, vastly extending the Tower's lifespan as compensation for the years it had spent under requisition.

### **Vision of catastrophe**

Did the Eiffel Tower have any practical use, let alone beauty? The war had resolved that argument. But perceptions had changed in other ways, for France herself was no longer the same nation. Initially, the Tower had epitomised the boldness and soaring ambition of the Belle Epoque, but France's self-confidence had been shattered by her colossal losses. Popular fiction reflected her post-war malaise, and her people's awareness of just how easily the world they knew might be obliterated.

In 1924, Alexandre Arnoux's novel, *Le règne du bonheur*, imagined a Paris destroyed by a cataclysm set in 1937. For Arnoux, the wreckage of civilisation is symbolised by the fate of the Eiffel Tower. He describes a vast forest, where his eye is caught by a strange form – a soaring, tapering column of vegetation. The summit is split and leaning over, as if it has been struck by lightning, and a tree has somehow taken root up there. The bizarre apparition is, of course, the Tower. Arnoux compares it to just a wild beast, for it no longer has any antennae, and no longer sends any messages, but he then stops and wonders whether he is allowing himself to be blinded by his prejudices. His generation used to think of usefulness in terms of an efficient, unadorned, mechanical appearance, yet is this mass of vegetation really devoid of any beauty or utility? Are the old values still valid?

As it happened, Arnoux was three years out. Disaster came to France not in 1937, but 1940, as a result of another war. Once again, the Eiffel Tower was requisitioned, only for its communications post to be evacuated in the face of the German Blitzkrieg. An act of sabotage stopped the Tower's lifts from working until the end of the Nazi occupation, and according to legend this deprived Adolf Hitler of the chance, during a visit to Paris, to be photographed looking down on the conquered city. In fact, he simply posed for an equally triumphalist shot with the Tower in the background.

Arnoux's apocalyptic vision nearly came true, for with the German army defeated in Normandy in the summer of 1944, Hitler demanded that the landmarks of Paris be blown up, leaving only a wrecked city to be liberated. The German Governor of Paris, General Dietrich von Choltitz, submitted a plan to dynamite the Tower as part of this destruction, although apparently without seriously intending to carry it out. Instead, a tricolour flag was soon flying from the top, and the Tower became a symbol of the liberation. Not until 1957 was the Tower's flagpole replaced by a TV mast, which not only changed the summit's profile but increased the height.

Once again, therefore, the Tower had survived a world war not only intact, but with a new lease of life by virtue of having been requisitioned. The supposedly 20-year existence agreed back in 1887 was again extended, and finally expired only at the end of 1979, with full ownership then passing to the City of Paris. Even so, the Tower was not out of danger.

Two of its narrowest escapes came just 50 years ago, during the French war in Algeria. In September 1958, terrorists seeking Algerian independence left a bomb in the toilets on the third floor of the Tower, but fortunately it was found and defused. Ironically, extremists on both sides saw the Tower as a target. In 1962, shortly before the end of the war, the police discovered a plan for blowing up one of the pillars of the Tower, in order to topple it into the Seine. This time, the plotters were not Algerians, but members of the Organisation de l'Armée secrète, intent on maintaining French control of Algeria.

Terrorism continues to be threat. In December 1994, an Air France plane was hijacked at Algiers airport by four members of the Groupe islamique armé, who were apparently intent on flying it into the Tower in a suicide attack, but the flight was stormed at Marseille after landing to refuel. Several subsequent plots were reported to have been foiled. As recently as September 2010, the Tower was twice evacuated as a result of bomb scares.

The Tower's age and solidity make it easy to overlook just how often this seemingly permanent Parisian landmark has come close to destruction. The skyline of one of the world's best-loved cities could easily have changed forever. Yet here lies a paradox. War, rather than felling the Eiffel Tower, actually helped secure her future, by extending the duration of the agreement that Gustave Eiffel had made back in 1887, and cementing its place firmly in the hearts of the French people. The iron lady of Paris was here to stay •





# Churchill's Irish Brigade

British wartime leader Winston Churchill wanted to see the Irish play a full role in the Allied assault on Nazi Germany. In bitter combat in North Africa and Italy, argues TIM NEWARK, they more than demonstrated their fighting spirit.





London Irish patrol north of Faenza in Italy.

It was a letter in the London Times that caught the attention of British wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

‘It appears that very large numbers of Irishmen have joined HM Forces since the outbreak of war,’ wrote retired General Sir Hubert Gough in September 1941. ‘This is their own spontaneous and unsolicited act, since owing to Ireland’s neutrality there have been no agencies where they could enlist at home and no recruiting campaign. It is a pity that the fact—well known as it appears to be in Ireland—is not more widely realized here, as it is valuable evidence that Iris neutrality is not a mask for a hostile spirit towards Britain and the Commonwealth at war.’

Gough went on to suggest that the fighting spirit of the Irish was particularly strong when they served in units grouped together under an Irish banner. Just as American neutrality was not compromised by Americans volunteering to serve in the Eagle Squadron of the RAF, then he recommended that Irish and Anglo-Irish serve together in an Irish brigade.

Churchill loved the idea and in an unguarded personal minute to the Secretary of State for War wrote: ‘I shall be glad to have an expression of opinion from the War Office on this suggestion. We have Free French and Vichy French, so why not Loyal Irish and Dublin Irish?’ The Irish government might not have appreciated the comparison to collaborationist Vichy France.

### Men of Irish Blood

Churchill’s enthusiasm for an Irish Brigade was strengthened when he saw extracts from letters secretly intercepted in Northern Ireland for a Postal Censorship Report. ‘Patrick is 19 years old,’ wrote one correspondent from Waterford to a friend in Hampshire. ‘He joined up entirely on his own bat and I must say that all his boy friends over here from three counties have done likewise, so Ireland shouldn’t be damned so freely.’

Churchill underlined several similar passages in red and repeated his request for the War Office to look at this suggestion: ‘I think now the time is ripe to form an Irish Brigade also an Irish Wing or Squadron of the RAE.’ The Prime Minister recommended that the Dublin-born Battle of Britain RAF Spitfire ace Paddy Finucane would make an excellent figurehead for such a force. ‘Pray let me have proposal,’ insisted Churchill. Then, with an eye to post-war developments, he added: ‘The movement might have important political reactions later on.’

It was the political ramifications of an Irish Brigade that concerned David

Margesson, Secretary of State for War, and Viscount Cranborne, Secretary of State for the Dominions, in their joint reply. They liked the idea of an official show of appreciation to all the volunteers coming from Eire, but they also did not wish to disrupt this flow: ‘Up to now, men have gone from Ireland unobtrusively, and nothing has been said to underline their presence in our armed forces. It has therefore been possible for the Southern Irish Government to wink at it. But were we to blazon abroad the part which the citizens of neutral Eire are taking in the war, contrary to the policy of their own Government, the Irish Government might well feel bound to take action to prevent the departure of any further volunteers from their shores to join our forces. Were they to do so, we should have lost far more than we gained.’

It would be estimated by the Dominions Office that some 43,000 Eire-born Irish men and women had joined the British services by the end of the war. In their letter to Churchill, Margesson and Cranborne made the case that southern Irish volunteers might not like it to be known that they had fought for the British as this might penalise them at home. ‘Further, there is the possibility that completely Irish units, so far from being the symbol of the close connection between Britain and Ireland, might become a fertile breeding ground for subversive agitation by the IRA and other disloyal elements, who would join them for this very purpose.’

Consideration was given to establishing a Shamrock Squadron, formed from ‘men of Irish blood from all parts of the world,’ but the view of the Air Ministry was that there was no demand for this within the service and that Irishmen would object to being removed from their current units. The only positive suggestion was to brigade together existing British Army Irish battalions—such as those from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Fusiliers and London Irish Rifles.

Somewhat deflated by the arguments coming from the War Office, Churchill scribbled his own reply on this joint memorandum: ‘As proposed. It is a halfway house.’ But, as if this wasn’t disappointing enough, word of the suggested Irish Brigade got to John Andrews, then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. In a forceful letter to Churchill, in which he apologised for burdening him with extra trouble, he appealed to the war leader’s acute sense of military history. ‘The name would inevitably be associated with the Irish who fought against England in the days of Marlborough, the Irish Brigade which



fought against Britain in the Boer War... and finally with a body of "Blue Shirts" organised in Eire a few years ago to fight in the Spanish Civil War.'

With Churchill abroad in the United States talking to US President Roosevelt, Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee stepped into the growing controversy, saying that Andrews had got the wrong end of the stick. There was no intention to raise an Irish Brigade as originally suggested by General Gough, just to brigade together several Ulster regiments within the British Army. He reassured the Northern Irish Prime Minister that no particular publicity would be given to the proposed brigade 'until occasion arises to do so when it has distinguished itself in action'. Andrews was unimpressed.

'While, of course, I appreciate the desire of the British Government to give recognition in due course to those Eire citizens who are loyally supporting the Allied cause,' he wrote, 'we feel that the use of Ulster regiments for that purpose would arouse resentment here. In my view, any policy calculated to obliterate or blur the distinction between the belligerency of Northern Ireland and the neutrality of Eire would confuse and mislead public opinion and be detrimental to the highest interest of the Empire as a whole.'

In the end, it was the will of Winston Churchill that prevailed, although in the moderated form suggested by the War Office. In January 1942, the 38th (Irish) Brigade came into being, consisting of the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the 2nd London Irish Rifles. The London Irish were a Territorial unit associated with the Royal Ulster Rifles.

The Irish identity of the Brigade was strongly established from the outset with a saffron-kilted pipe band for each battalion, a song-book full of Irish songs, and soldiers wearing the caubeen—a traditional Irish beret or tam o'shanter-style headdress worn with a feather hackle favoured by Irish warriors since at least the 17th century. Its first commander was Brigadier Morgan O'Donovan, who adopted the traditional clan title of 'The O'Donovan'. He was soon after succeeded by Brigadier Nelson Russell. The Irish 38th first went into action in November 1942 as part of the Anglo-American landings in French North Africa at Algiers in Operation Torch. It was the dramatic beginning to a very long and bloody series of campaigns for Churchill's cherished Irish Brigade.

## London Irish

Edmund 'Ted' O'Sullivan was a typical



**Sherman of 16th/5th Lancers passes through Irish position at Sinogogga.**



**2nd Battalion London Irish Rifles with 17pdr anti-tank gun during Italian campaign.**

London Irishman. Born in Peckham in 1919, his father's side of the family had come from Limerick in the 19th century and his mother's side from Kerry. Raised a Catholic and winning a scholarship to the Brompton Oratory, he had just got his first job as a clerk at the uniform-makers Hawkes of Saville Row, when the war came.

Called up in September 1939 into the 2nd Battalion of the London Irish Rifles, he spent the first three years of the war in training, including shooting practice on centre court at Wimbledon. Promoted to Colour Sergeant, O'Sullivan was one of the Irish Brigade that landed in North Africa in 1942.

'We climbed out of Algiers in thick service dress,' he recalled, 'carrying everything in the hot midday sun. The pipers carried only their pipes. The first mile out of Algiers was a steady climb up a road that wound in a semi-circle. Gradually men collapsed from heat and exhaustion. At first, stretcher-bearers went to attend to them. Eventually, we left them where they fell.'

Their first night in North Africa, sunlight ended abruptly at 6.00pm and the soldiers of the Irish Brigade had to huddle together under greatcoats and anti-gas capes against the intense cold of the night. The next morning, they had breakfast of biscuits spread with margarine and jam or potted meat, washed down with tea.

Part of the 6th Armoured Division, the London Irish and the rest of the 38th Brigade were transported by lorries to the battlefield in Tunisia along roads in the Atlas Mountains. The Italian-German forces were dug in along a north-south line 30 miles west of the capital of Tunis. The main Allied offensive came in January 1943. The weather was poor and heavy winter rain turned the ground to mud.

The London Irish were tasked with taking Point 286 on 20 January, a hilltop held by the Germans in the northern Bou

Arada sector. They took it just after dawn, but were swept off it in a counter-attack supported by tanks and armoured cars. As the London Irish went back to wrestle them off the hill, the Germans called in Stuka dive-bombers.

'It was practically impossible to dig in on the hard rocky slopes,' reported Brigadier Nelson Russell, 'and all through the day they were subjected to heavy artillery and extremely accurate mortar fire. This fine battalion refused to be shelled off the position. What they had, they held. But at heavy cost.' As the Brigadier later noted: 'The Irish Brigade learnt at a hard school. From the very start we were opposed by the Koch Brigade of the Hermann Goering Division. They were paratroops—all unmarried volunteers and the average age was 22/23.'

Throughout the fighting, Colour Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan was back at the supply base getting hot food for his men. When he arrived at the captured position, he was shocked to see that several key officers had been killed or wounded. 'It was a shambles,' recalled O'Sullivan. 'There seemed to be no order or discipline.' Some of the NCOs had dropped their weapons and fled. A total of six officers and 20 other ranks were killed, eight officers and 78 other ranks wounded and at least 136 other soldiers recorded as missing but later confirmed as either wounded or made prisoner.

Brigadier Russell considered it a tough but critical clash, whereas O'Sullivan believed it was poorly executed with men exhausted by previous night patrols. Along with the other colour sergeants, O'Sullivan was rebuked for not promoting NCOs from the survivors. 'The whole exercise was nonsense and the three colour sergeants had been used as scapegoats,' he commented bitterly.

In February, the Germans, led by General Erwin Rommel, assaulted the British and American lines. On the 26th,





6th Inniskillings, Irish Brigade, advance at Sinogogga, near Monte Cassino.

they came back to the Bou Arada position held by the London Irish. O'Sullivan was delivering rations to his men in the morning when his truck came under fire—tracer flashing past him.

Armed with a couple of grenades and rifles, he and the driver jumped out of the vehicle: 'We did not have a clear field of fire and could see little more than the bushes about 50 yards to our front. I was going to move forward when the undergrowth in front of us started to shake violently. I shouted a warning to Percy and we were preparing to open fire when a goat's head followed by about 20 others broke through the shrubs followed by a young lad.'

The enemy had moved on. The rest of the Irish Brigade clung on to their positions and after 24 hours of hard fighting, the Germans had had enough and withdrew. A hill near Hadj was re-taken with an artillery barrage. 'For many weeks after the battle,' remembered O'Sullivan, 'you could smell Hadj from almost a mile away. The stench of death was all pervading. Using an old towel, I cleaned the pieces of flesh which clung to the branches of trees. We buried our dead with honour but not the enemy who were interred without ceremony.'

### Smelly sight

The German breakthrough failed and the Allies pushed on towards Tunis. After a period of rest, the Irish Brigade, including the London Irish, were transferred to the 78th Infantry Division. On 22 April, a

massive Allied barrage crashed down on the Germans and the Irish Brigade played their part in the assault on the German lines that eventually cracked. As they closed in on the capital, Brigadier Russell drove past a mile-long column trudging along the dusty roadside. 'About 3,000 prisoners,' he noted. 'Bosche and Italian, soldiers, sailors and airmen—a mixed bag. It was a pleasant—though smelly sight.'

The Irish Brigade was given the honour of first entering Tunis, but they were not too sure what sort of reception they would get. Just in case, recorded Russell, 'The troops were all loaded up with bombs, Piats, mortars and petards—all set for a bellyful of street fighting—and the last lap.' They needn't have worried.

'I remained in my three-tonner,' said O'Sullivan, 'which soon became bedecked with flowers. The men were garlanded, kissed and cheered by the French colon[ial]s, who were relieved the war was over for them with little damage to their home.' Brigadier Russell was kissed twice by the delighted citizens. At a victory parade on 20 May, the Irish Brigade marched in their caubeens with saffron kilted pipers before Generals Eisenhower, Alexander and Montgomery.

'I always felt I was very lucky to command the Irish Brigade,' wrote Brigadier Russell at the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign. 'It's the command an Irishman would court—and there a good many Irishmen in the Army. I wouldn't

change my command for all the tea in China, or perhaps better, all the stout in Guinesses!'

The Irish Guards also fought in North Africa and it was in Tunisia in 1943 that Irish Guardsman John Kenneally won a Victoria Cross by charging German Panzer grenadiers firing a Bren gun from his hip. 'This outstanding act of gallantry,' said his citation, 'and the dash with which it was executed completely unbalanced the enemy company, which broke up in disorder.'

Kenneally then repeated this exploit two days later, inflicting so many casualties on the Germans that they cancelled their planned assault on the Allied lines. Although wounded in this attack, he refused to give up his Bren gun and carried on fighting throughout the day. It was an extraordinary achievement, but Kenneally wasn't all that he seemed. In fact, he wasn't Irish at all, but half-Jewish—from Birmingham.

His real name was Leslie Robinson. When war broke out, he joined the Royal Artillery in an anti-aircraft battery, but found this boring and deserted. In Glasgow, he fell in with a gang of Irish labourers who gave him a fake identity as John Patrick Kenneally and a fake past which included a childhood in Tipperary. Under this name he joined the Irish Guards.

Two years later, Churchill was delighted to hear of the VC, contrasting this 'Irish' hero with the Irish premier 'frolicking' with the Germans. Such publicity was the last thing Kenneally needed. 'It was the worst thing that could have happened to me,' he said. 'I thought "Now I'm bound to be rumbled", but I never was.'

### Merciless work

In July 1943, the Irish Brigade joined the 78th Division in the Allied invasion of Sicily. It was the stepping-stone towards attacking Mussolini's Italy, considered the soft underbelly of the Axis forces. The Americans had a relatively smooth advance across the island, but the British and Canadians took the brunt of German resistance as they tried to cover their retreat to the mainland.

The Irish Brigade was tasked with taking the hilltop town of Centuripe. It was a hard but effective assault, in which all three Irish battalions played a part. Brigadier Russell concluded: 'The capture of Centuripe had repercussions on both flanks—as it forced the Bosche to re-adjust the whole line.' Many good men were lost in the fighting, including Peter Fitzgerald of the London Irish. 'A great character and a fearless leader,' noted Russell. 'He was, by trade, a West of Ireland barrister—about 36



highest sense.'

For Colour Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan it wasn't just the Germans that posed the greatest threat. Worn-out 25-pounders delivered their shells short of the enemy, endangering their own side, while malaria and dysentery invalidated many men, including O'Sullivan. Even a period of rest had its dangers, as the colour sergeant nearly drowned in strong currents off the island as he tried to swim to a nearby beach; two other adventurous soldiers were not so lucky and perished at sea.

On 24 September 1943, the Irish Brigade landed at Taranto on the heel of the Italian mainland. Now part of the British 8th Army, their mission was to advance along the Adriatic coast, breaking through two German defensive lines from Termoli to Ortona. It was merciless work. At one point, the London Irish discovered 20 Germans in a deep dugout. They refused to surrender and so the London Irish dynamited the entrances and brought up a bulldozer to bury the Germans under tons of earth.

Because of their relentless fighting spirit, the Germans had a new respect for the Irish Brigade and dubbed them 'Die Irische SS'. In the meantime, the rest of the Allies were facing a difficult time at Monte Cassino, where the Germans had fortified the hilltop monastery and were defying all efforts to take it. The winter weather was appalling—heavy rain followed by thick snow.

The Irish Brigade was shifted west to a posting in the Apennine Mountains. Fresh British soldiers joined them, many not from an Irish background but happy to adapt to their new military culture. Among the new influx of officers was Lieutenant Nicholas Mosley, the son of the imprisoned British Fascist leader, Sir Oswald Mosley. He later wrote up his own account of fighting with the Irish Brigade.

For Christmas, they were billeted at Campobasso in a large Franciscan monastery. 'During Christmas Eve,' recalled O'Sullivan, 'the monks carried around a harmonium and sang carols at each cell. The Catholics attended midnight Mass, formed a choir and sang the Credo. Our Christmas fare included pork chops.'

Brigadier Nelson Russell added his own observation of the feast: 'Each man was getting busy on a plate which held about 3lbs of turkey, pork and ham; happy in the thoughts that he would shortly follow it up with 2lbs of plum pudding—the whole thing diluted by a couple of pints of beers—steadied and solidified by great cans of steaming liquid—which smelt like an unauthorized rum issue (but who cares for local by-laws? certainly not the Irish



The German bastion at Monte Cassino was made even more formidable to attack when Allied bombing reduced it to ruins.

Brigade on Christmas Day).'

In January, elite German mountain troops swooped on a patrol of the London Irish. Properly equipped with white smocks and skis, the Germans briefly captured the frozen-footed Irish until a counter-attack released them. In March, a new Brigadier, Pat Scott of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, took over from the ill Nelson Russell.

One of the departing Brigadier's last acts was to turn over the body of a dead Irishman on a rocky crag in Tangoucha. 'He was facing the right way,' wrote Russell, 'the last round of a clip in the breech and three dead Germans in front of him. His name was Duffy. After all is over—and the remainder of the Empire is quite understandably irritated with Ireland—I hope these countless Duffys, from both the North and South, and in all three Services, will be remembered. We also supply quite a few Generals.'

In the same month, the Irish Brigade was moved westward again, this time behind the Cassino front. Brigadier Pat Scott witnessed a massive aerial bombardment of the German-held monastery. 'It seems questionable,' he wondered, 'if one wishes to attack a town or village, whether the right thing to do is to smash it all up first or not. If streets are an unrecognisable wreck of rubble two bad things happen, you cannot drive down the streets with tanks and it is quite

impossible to tell which piece of rubble holds the enemy.'

### Monte Cassino

Overlooking the battered monastery, the London Irish had to monitor the ongoing battle from the 2,300-foot peak of Monte Castellone. Supplies could only reach them by mule up dangerous mountain track exposed to enemy shelling.

'We had to take particular care as the nervous muleteers were attempting to ditch their loads,' remembered O'Sullivan, 'I finally arrived at the top with about half a dozen mules. Loads were spread along the track behind us.' Brigadier Scott was impressed by the effort involved. 'The Battalion's administrative teams really came into their own during this period,' he noted—and that praise included O'Sullivan. 'The Irish Rifles bakery never failed to produce appetising cakes for the warriors on the mountain-top.'

The London Irish needed something to keep their spirits up as they were unable to dig slit trenches in the hard rock and had to clear up the rubbish and excrement left by the French troops before them. For the month of April, they carried out their sentry duty, sitting motionless during the day to avoid attracting the heavy mortar fire that pounded all the positions around Monte Cassino. At one point, Brigadier Scott was given a chilling task when General





German skull and helmet after bitter fighting at Monte Cassino.

Harold Alexander asked him to work out a plan for capturing the monastery. Replied Scott: 'I said I thought the best plan was for someone else to capture it.'

Fortunately, Alexander agreed. 'We were very glad when some Poles started coming over to have a look around,' recalled Scott. 'They were being given the unenviable task of capturing the Monastery and breaking through the mountains behind it when the big battle came off.'

As the Poles finally took the summit of Monte Cassino in mid-May, the Irish Brigade was shifted to Monte Trocchio, east of the river Rapido, ready to advance along the Liri valley to link up with the Poles beyond Cassino. On 15 May, Colonel Ion Goff, London Irish commander, rode off in a jeep to carry out some reconnaissance, when his vehicle was hit by German shellfire. O'Sullivan was in the camp when a carrier came in acting as an ambulance: 'I went over and found the battalion's commander, Colonel Goff, seriously wounded and in agony. I helped unload him. With him was what looked like a midget who was obviously dead. It

took me some time to recognise the body as Goff's driver who was more than 6ft tall. He had lost both legs.'

Goff died shortly afterwards. 'His loss was a very sad one,' wrote Scott, 'and it reflects the greatest credit on the London Irish that in spite of losing this trusted leader on the eve of one of the biggest battles they had ever fought, it in no way detracted from the magnificent performance they were to put in the next day.'

On the 16th, the battle began at 9.00am with a tremendous artillery barrage by several hundred big guns. The London Irish surged along the road to Sinogogga—a fortified village that was part of the Gustav Line. A few were held up by Germans firing from the cellars of houses, but other riflemen poured into the enemy dugouts using bayonets to finish off the Germans before the barrage had barely passed over them.

When the London Irish were halted, supporting tanks from the 16/5 Lancers blasted the enemy positions with high explosive shells from their 75mm guns. Many of the Germans were caught away from their anti-tank guns by the artillery

barrage and those that managed to get to their guns were shot down by infantry fire. 'The show never really looked like stopping,' noted the battalion report.

### Direct hits

The London Irish were most vulnerable on their open left flank across the Piopetto river when Germans fired heavy machine guns and mortars at them. The Lancers helped by scoring several direct hits on German armoured vehicles and blowing up two ammunition dumps. H Company of London Irish eventually broke into the village of Sinogogga where they had to engage in fierce hand to hand fighting for over an hour as the Germans tenaciously defended the shattered buildings with grenades, MG 34 machine guns and 'Schmeisser' MP 40 submachine guns.

A self-propelled 75mm gun proved the most deadly of the German weapons and Corporal Jimmy Barnes from County Monaghan went forward by himself, covered only by a Bren gunner, to deal with the vehicle. He killed one of the German crew with a grenade before being killed himself. Shortly after this, the Germans in the village surrendered. Barnes was unsuccessfully recommended for the Victoria Cross.

It took another hour of hard fighting for the rest of the London Irish to take their objectives. In total, their casualties numbered five officers and 60 other ranks. The Germans lost 100 killed and 120 captured, including Hermann Goering paratroopers—their old rivals from Tunisia. O'Sullivan's best mate Platoon sergeant Eddie Mayo, a car worker from Dagenham, was killed in the battle. Two more days of hard fighting followed until the Germans realised their position was lost and they withdrew—the monastery at Monte Cassino falling on the 18th.

Another casualty of the fighting on the Gustav Line was Lieutenant-Colonel Humphrey 'Bala' Bredin, battalion leader of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Shot through both legs, he remained in command throughout the battle, propped up in the front of a jeep. Commissioned into the Royal Ulster Rifles in 1936, he had been placed second-in-command of the Royal Irish Fusiliers during the earlier fighting at Cassino. He was then transferred to command the Inniskillings. Following his recovery from his wound, he took over command of the London Irish Rifles. Thus, he held senior command of all three battalions in the Irish Brigade.

Already the recipient of the Military Cross in Palestine before the war, Bredin won a Distinguished Service Order for



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**2nd Battalion London Irish Rifles, part of the 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade, advance towards river Reno in 'Kangaroo' armoured carriers, Italy 1945.**

his leadership in Italy. 'Throughout this operation he commanded his battalion with the utmost skill and inspired his men by his examples of personal gallantry under fire,' ran the citation. Famously, he never wore a steel helmet, preferring to wear the Irish caubeen and carry a cane into battle.

Seven days after the fighting at Sinogogga, the Hitler Line was broken and the Allies could march on to Rome. At one point, a soldier in the Royal Irish Fusiliers remembered approaching a junction commanded by an officer of the Irish Regiment of Canada. 'Canadian Irish, this way,' he barked, 'English Irish that way.'

### **Papal visit**

The Americans got to Rome first, but on 12 June the Irish Brigade accepted a special invitation to visit the Pope. Brigadier Pat Scott was an Irish Protestant but he most certainly was not going to miss such an honour for the brigade. He faced similar competition for the limited number of places for the papal audience.

'Many influential members of Orange Lodges were trying to get a seat in the party by virtue of their high rank or long service,' observed Scott. He intended that Catholic soldiers of long service should get first choice, and those born in Ireland, but there were not enough to fill the quota of officers from each battalion so Protestants took the spare places. 'The "heretic" element was almost entirely made up of out-and-out

Orangemen. I would like to mention a few names, both of these officers and of some men of the other ranks who afterwards visited His Holiness, but it might be unkind to put their names in print and have them read out in their local Orange Hall at home.'

The Irish Brigade party arrived at the Vatican at 8.45am and were escorted by the elaborately clad Papal Guards to the audience. Pope Pius XII gave a short speech praising the Irish for spreading the Faith around the world to America, Australia, South Africa and other nations. Scott then asked the Pope if he would like to hear his pipers play.

O'Sullivan was at the audience and noted the irony of what followed next: 'The massed brigade band in their saffron kilts and caubeens with the various coloured hackles and regimental badges played "Killaloe" followed by "The Sash My Father Wore." This was probably the first and last time one of the signature tunes of the Orange Order was heard in the Vatican. His Holiness tapped his foot to the beat of the martial music and obviously enjoyed the alien sound.'

The Pope then blessed the rosaries brought by the Catholic soldiers and they knelt to kiss his ring. The Orangemen remained in their seats.

Hard fighting for the Irish Brigade continued into late 1944 and 1945 as they advanced through Italy against stubborn German resistance. In a battle three miles

south of Lake Trasimeno, the London Irish lost more than 70 men killed, wounded and missing. For the final phase of the war, the London Irish were issued with armoured carriers called 'Kangaroos' and they were dubbed the 'Kangaroo Army'

The Irish Brigade ended the war in Austria, having fought their last major combat south of the river Po. From its fighting in Tunisia, all the way through Italy, the Irish Brigade has lost more than 900 men killed of all ranks.

O'Sullivan survived the bitter last stages of the war. In Austria in May 1945, he was given 28 days leave in England. As he trekked back across Europe, he witnessed German cities in ruins and thousands of refugees wandering along roads back to their devastated homes. After three and a half years away from London, he arrived back in Brixton. 'My family did not know of my leave and my mother was overcome when she open the door to me.'

O'Sullivan suffered a recurring bout of malaria he had picked up in Italy and his leave was extended. It was during this rest period that he met an ATS officer who later became his wife. His soldiering finally ended in August 1946. 'By that time,' he recalled, 'I would have spent six years ten months in the army instead of the six months which I was originally called up to serve in October 1939.' After the war, Ted settled in Farnham Common with his wife to run a newsagent and tobacconist store •



# Great Military Artists



## Thomas Jones Barker

**T**homas Jones Barker was highly regarded by established society and the general public of mid-Victorian Britain for his dramatic battle pieces. Born in Bath in 1815, the year of Waterloo, to a family of notable artists, his father Benjamin was a successful painter, and his uncle Thomas being the celebrated landscape master known as 'Barker of Bath.'

Thomas Jones first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1845. His first military canvas of note to be shown at the RA was 'Wellington at Sorauren' in 1853, depicting the great commander writing an order in the field for his aide-de-camp Lord Fitzroy Somerset, standing with his horse, to fetch reinforcements during the Peninsular campaign. His pictures were some of the first to capture small incidents in battle, rather than the traditional busy panoramic views favoured by others.

### Battle pieces

Barker did, however, produce several grand panoramic battle pieces that

proved highly popular with the print-buying public. Commissioned by the art publishers Agnew's of Manchester to paint a large work relating to the Siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War, Barker made the journey to Crimea to make sketches of the locality. The completed panorama called 'The Allied Generals before Sebastopol' was shown at a leading London gallery in June 1856 and then went on tour. The vast canvas contained more than 80 miniature portraits of prominent soldiers and civilians, including Lord Raglan, the Duke of Cambridge, the French general Canrobert, Prince Napoleon, the Turk Omar Pasha, Florence Nightingale, and William Russell, correspondent of The Times of London. Agnew's made a huge profit from exhibition fees and print sales.

The artist also painted several versions of the Charge of the Light Brigade, including 'The Rally, Balaclava,' which now hangs in the Naval and Military Club in London. His poignant incident of 'The

Charger of Captain Nolan bearing back his dead master to the British lines,' based on an eyewitness account is now part of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. His oil on canvas 'Taking the Russian Guns at Balaclava,' dated 1877, was discovered in a derelict garage in 1957; it was sold by the Parker Gallery.

Barker's other popular panoramic painting that sold well as a lithograph depicted the Relief of Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny. He completed the triumphant scene in 1859, based on sketches made in India in 1858 by the Swedish artist Egron Lundgren. It shows the meeting of Generals Havelock, Outram and Campbell at Lucknow in November 1857. The large canvas was obtained by the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum in 1875 and was destroyed in the Glasgow blitz of WW2. A smaller version painted for Agnew's engraver was bought by the National Portrait Gallery in 1985. The artist died in 1882 aged 67 •

*Peter Newark*



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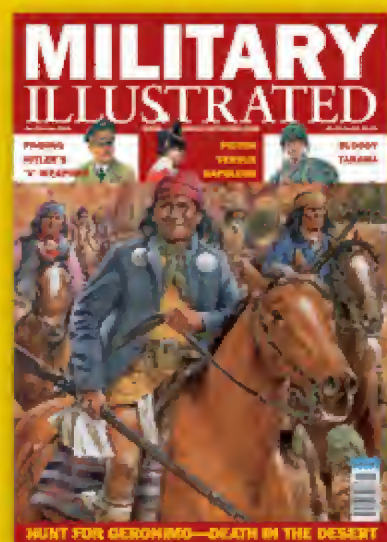
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# Re-enactors

## Older but still fighting

Re-enactors are getting older, but PHILIPP ELLIOT-WRIGHT says they should turn to recreating past militia units

**T**hinning grey hair, spreading waistlines and ever more blurring vision means many re-enactors struggle to accurately convey the average combatant from the past. The vast majority of frontline troops were on average in their mid-20s. Equally, with ever fewer events being staged as the economic crisis continues, there are fewer opportunities for re-enactors to meet to practice drill and other military skills. Thus, some veteran re-enactors of a certain age have chosen to take the field as a Second World War catering unit. However, combining the issue of age and somewhat rusty skills with a continuing desire to engage in a military portrayal, it is hardly surprising that there is now a growth in portrayals of militia units.

### Colonial settlers

Throughout history, militia formations have been composed of ordinary citizens who provide defense, general paramilitary service or simple law enforcement, in times of emergency without being paid a regular salary or committed to a fixed term of service. They were, and in some parts of the world, still are, members of the local community called upon to bear arms when necessary. Thus the range of ages and the degree of military skill tends to be closer to the average re-enactor.

In Britain, New France and Old England, a society focused on the campaigns of the Seven Years War fought in North America, field re-enactors portraying militia and irregulars from both sides. Thus, dressed in civilian clothing combined with military equipment, 'English' colonial settlers take their place alongside formations of redcoats to confront French-Canadian 'Coureur des Bois' and irregulars known as 'milice', clothed in a mixture of civilian and military attire, who fought alongside Montcalm's

white-coated French regulars. In the US, the very essence of American mythology surrounding the American War of Independence is the Minuteman who fired the first shot at North Bridge at Concord, near the town of Lexington in 1775. Every year, hundreds proudly don the clothing of a militia to re-enact the confrontation with British regulars that triggered the formation of the United States of America.

Re-enacting these colonial formations has the attraction of permitting individual re-enactors to indulge in a variety of clothing and equipment. Given the strictures of uniform regulations and the need for substantive drill sessions to ensure accurate formations are maintained, the relaxed approach of the militia can be very attractive, especially for the older re-enactor who has spent decades engaged in more formal portrayals.

### Local heroes

When it comes to the 19th century, the Napoleonic Wars witnessed various popular revolts where local militias played a crucial role. In Spain and Portugal, irregular forces are today lauded as heroes who took the field and confronted Napoleon's Army when their regular army's failed. However, those engaged in Spanish and Portuguese

military re-enactment prefer portraying regular formations. Meanwhile, a different style of militia was seen in Germany in the form of the Landwehr, albeit some may quibble with the Prussian Landwehr being classed as true militia, especially as they were uniformed. In Germany today, there are various re-enactment groups clothed and equipped as Landwehr, including both the 3rd and 5th East Prussian.

This brings us to the 20th century and a more formal definition of lawful combatants as militia needed to be distinguished from irregulars, the former to be treated according to the Geneva Convention as soldiers, whilst the latter were subject to arbitrary justice as being little better than terrorists. For this reason, the most modern portrayal of a European militia that saw extensive combat, that of the German Volkssturm who took the field at the end of the Second World War, are identified by distinctive armbands. Raised from the male population from anyone aged 16-60, they wore just about everything, both civilian and military, making them perfect for the modern re-enactor of a certain age. Whilst spoken about for years amongst veteran re-enactors, a small Volkssturm group is finally being formed to take the field this summer •







## A TRACTOR FOR THE EAST

Marcus Nicholls takes a brief look at Dragon's new Raupenschlepper-Ost with PaK40 anti-tank gun

**T**he little 'tracked-tractor, east' (as Raupenschlepper Ost translates) is a popular modelling subject, even though the only mainstream 1:35 kit available to modellers over the decades has been the Italeri offering, which admittedly has done sterling service since the 1970s. Now though, Dragon have stepped into the fore with an all new tooling of the vehicle, and it's not just the standard tractor variant, it's the expedient PaK40 armed version which is far more interesting. The kit comes in a regular sized Dragon box, adorned with a superb illustration by Canadian artist Ron Volstad, although the four-man crew shown here is not included inside; I think this fact should have been stated on the packaging somewhere.

Dragon's mouldings are impeccable as ever, with no sign of flash, shrink-marks etc., to mar the finish. The RSO is a small vehicle and so for once, the box is not bulging with sprues, but as the phrase goes, "small is beautiful"

and that's very much the case here. A set of individual-link tracks is supplied to fit to the delicately rendered running gear, as well as a big plus-point; a lovely replica of the RSO's air-cooled V8 engine, complete with intake manifold, cooling fans, pulleys and drive shaft. The chassis builds up into a handsome miniature of the original and with the engine and drive-train fitted, it will look very cool indeed. The PaK40 is Dragon's earlier release and a newly moulded mounting plate is supplied to mate it with the vehicle. Photo-etched brass parts are supplied for the 'cockpit' hatches and very fine, pre-formed metal wire handles are also included. Decals for one of seven examples (all Eastern Front) are provided. This is a gorgeously detailed kit of an odd but great-looking machine and I'm sure it will prove popular •

Available widely from good model shops; UK import by The Hobby Company, [www.hobbyco.net](http://www.hobbyco.net)



# Militaria

## First Class Sale

**T**his year opened with a first class, general, sale of arms, armour and militaria by Wallis and Wallis of Lewes. The catalogue, with improved colour photography, was filled with 370 lots of reasonably priced pieces. This was a sale to please the collector with modest finances. There were several lots that sold for less than £50 and only four went to four figures. Hardly surprising, a lance cap of an officer of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers was one selling at £1,900 and a pair of flintlock duelling pistols by Sidall, c1820, sold for £3,400 despite being in less than first class condition. The surprise of the sale was the £4,500 fetched by a Zulu knobkerry. What made it so expensive was the terminal knob, which instead of being the more usual globe shape, was carved overall with hexagonal scallops. This simple variation increased the value of the lot by thousands of pounds and is another indication of the importance that being different can make to a lot. The vendor must have been surprised and delighted when the cheque arrived! At the other end of the scale one purchaser went away with 11 RASC cap badges for £20.

### Out-of-the-Ordinary

As always the section of Collectors' Items and Models offered some out-of-the-ordinary items including a tinplate World War I collecting box for St Dunstan's charity for blinded troops, which fetched £475. A quite attractive Victorian truncheon made only £85, probably because of a split. The badge collector had a large selection to choose from and there were some good buys to be had for this market seems to stay fairly solid. A RFC pilot's brevet sold for a good figure of £140. The prize item was a silver cap badge of an officer of the 19th Alexandra Princess of Wales Own Hussars, hall marked for 1902, and the bidding soared to an amazing £1,550, before the hammer came down. In the small section



Pilot's brevet of Royal Flying Corps, £120. (Wallis and Wallis)

of Third Reich material the prime item was a double-sided, trumpet banner with silver bullion and tassels, which bore the runes of the SS, so ensuring that it made £500.

There was a good selection of edged weapons including an attractive 1796 Infantry officer's sword with blued and gilt blade with engraved trophies and foliage. Complete with its sword knot, it sold for £320, the price rather lower than might be expected, but this was probable because the blueing and gilding was rather faded. Much plainer but still very attractive to collectors was the 1796 light cavalry sword with its broad, curved blade, stirrup hilt and steel scabbard, which sold for £390. For the book collector or researcher, there was very good choice of books, many of which, whilst not exactly rare, are still difficult to find. One such was *The History of the Spur* by Lacy for £100. A good bargain were the two volumes of engravings of armour from the Meyrick collection at Goodrich Court by Joseph Skelton. These books are normally quite expensive but because this lot was not in very good condition it sold for a mere £50.

### De-activated guns

There was a small group of de-activated weapons and at first glance several seemed to be in the wrong section of the sale, since antique firearms do not have to be de-activated. There was a .36 Colt Navy percussion revolver but the listing stated that it was by Uberti the Italian manufacturer who produced many post-World War Two replica firearms. As a modern manufactured percussion revolver, it is counted as a modern firearm and as such cannot be owned without a firearm certificate unless it is de-activated. Presumably because it could not be used for shooting with black powder and was not an antique, it failed to sell. There were also a de-activated modern Remington revolver and Colt Walker Dragoon percussion revolver but these did sell



Plug bayonet with sawback blade, £470. (Wallis and Wallis)

at £90 and £250. The Dragoon made a good price probably because the chances of acquiring a genuine Dragoon were absolutely minimal. Perhaps some one thought better to have a copy rather than nothing at all, if trying to build a complete collection of Colt percussion revolvers.

Another item that potentially involved the law was a Malacca swordstick for these are prohibited weapons unless they are antique. This sadly leaves the way open for the first contested case when a collector is charged with the possession of a prohibited or offensive weapon and claims the item is antique. This has not happened yet but it is sadly a possibility. This particular article sold for £60. One slightly unusual piece on offer was a plug bayonet with its fairly typical cylindro-globose wooden hilt fitted with a thistle pommel and quillon



Officer's silver cap badge of 19th Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own Hussars, 1902, £1,550. (Wallis and Wallis)

terminals. The blade tapered to a point, and had a fuller and a sawback edge. This could suggest that it might be intended for use in hunting when butchering a carcass.

The current demand for good examples of Asian armour was confirmed by the £575 paid for a good example of an Indian helmet or Kuhlakh Khud. The domed skull was decorated overall with panels of gilded inscriptions, scrolls and figures and with a centrally mounted spike and two plume holders. The adjustable nasal bar was present as was the mail camail protecting the neck, making this a very desirable example of this style of helmet. Similarly, the market for interesting air weapons flourishes and a good 1926 Webley air pistol together with a number of associated items and the original box fetched £350 •

Frederick Wilkinson



# Museums & Shows

## The Fighting Ninth

JOHN NORRIS visits a regimental museum in Norwich

**O**ne would be hard-pressed to place a pin in a map of the world to find a place where the British army has not served on campaign. Tibet seems remote even today but over 100 years ago the British army served in this wilderness known as the 'Roof of the World' between 1903 and 1904 in an almost forgotten expedition led by Colonel Younghusband commanding 3,000 men. One of the units serving there was the Norfolk Regiment which had been raised as Cornwall's Regiment in 1685.

### Vanished

Today this episode and many other events, including changes to its title, are

told at the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum at Shirehall, Market Avenue, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3JQ. The regiment was granted the prefix 'Royal' in 1935 and the list of battle honours is an envious one stretching back to the 18th century and continues to the Korean War 1951-1952.

The museum contains a fine selection of weaponry, uniforms, medals and other regimental souvenirs supported with documents and photographs. Over the centuries, the regiment has endured more than its fair share of combat in the course of which it has earned for itself the nickname 'The Fighting Ninth' from the fact it was the 9th Regiment of Foot. Its other nickname is 'The Holy Boys' and this is explained in the museum.

During the Gallipoli Campaign, the 1/5th of the regiment was engaged in the area around Tekke Tepe. Following an attack on the 12 August 1915, they were reported as having simply 'vanished'. Today we know they were surrounded and killed to a man. Twenty-five years later during the retreat to Dunkirk, men of the 2nd Battalion were killed by SS troops at the site of La Paradis. Both tragic events are told in the museum along with many other stories including accounts of the six VCs awarded to the regiment and two of which are held by the museum.

For further details telephone 01603 493650

## April UK Diary

### ■ 3: Sunday

Military Collectors Fair is being held at the Civic Centre, Kentish Way, Bromley, Kent. Doors open between 9.30am and 2.30pm with models, books and other collectables on offer. Further details telephone 0771 409 4009.

### ■ 7: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Lar Joye presenting a talk entitled 'Understanding 1916; The Easter Rising in Dublin'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm with free entry. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 10: Sunday

Militaria Arms and Armour Fair is being held at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TZ. Wide range of collectables for every interest. Further details telephone 07595 511981 or visit [www.chatham-militaria-fairs.com](http://www.chatham-militaria-fairs.com)

Northern Arms Fairs is holding a collectors' fair at the Cedric Ford Pavillion, Newark Showground, NG24 2NY. Doors open between 10am and 3pm. Models, books and other items. Further details telephone 01423 780759 or visit [www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk](http://www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk)

Military Vehicle Display at York Castle. This is a unique event right in the heart of the historic city of York. Further details telephone 01943 864337.

### ■ 14: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Charles Harris presenting a talk entitled 'Poster Wars'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm with free entry. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 16: Saturday

The Welling Model Club is hosting its Model Show and Open Day at the Falconwood Community Centre, The Green, Welling, Kent. Trade stands, displays and competitions. Further details telephone 07795 490901.

Poole Vikings Model Club is hosting its Model Show at Parkstone Grammar School, Soper Lane, Poole, Dorset BH17 7EP. Trade stands, displays and competitions. Further details telephone 01202 535059.

Plymouth Scale Model Exhibition is being held at Plymouth Guildhall with doors open between 10am and 4.30pm. War gaming display, model railway and other displays.

Classic and Military Vehicle Exhibition at Bridgemere Garden World near Nantwich in Cheshire. Around 200 vehicles are expected. Further details telephone 01270 521100.

### ■ 16 and 17: Saturday & Sunday

Model Railway Exhibition is on display at Queen Elizabeth's School, Blandford Road, Wimborne, Dorset. Trade stands, displays and

layouts. Doors open from 10.30am each day with entrance £4 for adults.

For further details visit [www.wimrail.org.uk](http://www.wimrail.org.uk)

### ■ 17: Sunday

The Gatwick Aviation Society is holding its 22nd International Aircraft Enthusiasts Fair at Pease Pottage Hill, Crawley, RH11 9BQ. Doors open between 10am and 5pm with entrance charge of £4. Wide range of collectables on sale including models, books, photographs and much more. Further details telephone 01403 252628 or visit [www.gatwickaviationsociety.org.uk](http://www.gatwickaviationsociety.org.uk)

Chelmsford Militaria Fair is being held at the Marconi Social Club, Beehive Lane, Chelmsford, Essex. Doors open between 10am and 2pm with admission price £2.50. Further details telephone 07595 511981 or visit [www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com](http://www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com)

Northern Arms Fairs are holding a militaria collectors' fair at the Pudsey Civic Hall, opposite the Pudsey Railway Station LS28 5TA. Doors open between 10am and 3pm. Books, models and other items for sale. Further details telephone 01423 780759 or visit [www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk](http://www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk)

Militaria and Medal Fair organised by Mark Carter is being held at the Prince's Hall, Prince's Way, Aldershot, Hants GU11 1NX. Doors open between 10.30am and 2.30pm. Models, books and photographs. Further details telephone 01753 534777.

*Continued on p58*



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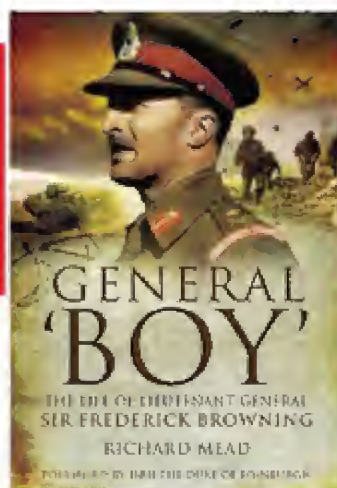




# Book Reviews

## General 'Boy' Browning; the Life of Lt Gen Sir Frederick Browning

by Richard Mead  
(Pen & Sword)  
hardback, 276pp,  
£25.00



This first biography of the man behind the formation of Britain's Airborne Forces and associated with the failure of Operation Market Garden in 1944 is long overdue. 'Boy' gained his reputation as a fighting soldier in WW1, when he won a DSO as a Lieutenant. His belief in drill, discipline, good humour and physical fitness was exhibited in various posts between the wars. He possessed a dual persona: charming and confident in public, but moody, bad-tempered and anxious in his personal life. His marriage to the famous novelist Daphne Dumaourier was problematic and may account for this.

Mead does not excuse his subject in the forensic examination of Browning's responsibility for the failure at Arnham. Browning later acted as CoS to Mountbatten at SEAC and was appointed Military Secretary after war. He also served in the Royal Household of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. Browning's nervous breakdown, his clandestine relationships with other women and his various illnesses are outlined and co-existed alongside his charitable works, artistic interests and enduring love for Daphne. Hopefully this book will encourage other military historians to explore more aspects of his career.

John Allen

## The Varangian Guard 988-1453

by R D'Amato  
(Osprey Men-at-Arms)  
softback, 48pp, £9.99



Beginning as enemies of Byzantium, Varangian axemen became the iconic guards of the Emperors for hundred of years. Their heyday was from the first time Vladimir of Kiev sent some

troops to help Basil II until the capture of Constantinople by crusaders in 1204. Originally, they were Rus and Scandinavians; after 1066 their ranks were flooded by English exiles. They fought with the combination of long-handled axe and spear, heavily armoured and with large shields, and were considered the finest infantry in the Christian world. There is a debate as to whether they also carried the ancient scythe-like rhompaia, as the author believes, or other more 'modern' kinds of pole arm, as most of the illustrations show. The colour plates are sumptuous and detailed, really evoking the wealth of elite troops, and are mostly convincing. Unfortunately, the 'Cretan Guardsman' of Plate H is an uncritical copy of an icon of a military saint, and so useless. That aside, this is an excellent study of a fascinating subject.

Matthew Bennett

## Erich von Manstein Hitler's Master Strategist

by B Lemay  
(Casemate) hardback,  
540pp, £25.00



Manstein has been seen, with reason, as the military genius of the Wehrmacht in WW2. It was his plans that led to the rapid defeat of Poland and France in 1939-40, and, when in independent command in the Crimea in 1941-42, he completely overran the Soviet forces in two offensives, the second at odds of 1:3 against his own forces. Also, had he not been restrained by cautious superiors, his coup against Leningrad in the first days of Operation Barbarossa could have spared the Germans a long and eventually fruitless siege, allowing them to deploy much-needed resources elsewhere on the Ostfront.

At the Nuremberg war crime trials he turned his incisive intelligence to legal argument, becoming the 'savior of the General Staff [from execution] and the honor of the German soldier'. Whether this was a fair outcome is another matter for discussion in this book, as it apparent that Manstein, along with

his Prussian military-aristocratic peers, connived with the genocidal policies of the Nazi state, while at the same time distancing themselves from them and pleading ignorance of their outcomes. Accordingly, he did not live up to his motto of being 'a knight without fear and without reproach', although he was an exemplary military administrator and operational commander.

Matthew Bennett

## Spanish Civil War Tanks: the proving ground for Blitzkrieg

by Steven J Zaloga  
(Osprey New Vanguard)  
softback, 48pp, £9.99



The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 saw rebel Nationalists supported by Germany and Italy overcome the Republican government receiving aid from the Soviet Union. The reasons for Franco's victory were wider than just tank warfare, yet the author makes an interesting contribution to the Blitzkrieg debate as he identifies several key factors in their use. Firstly, that a fighting doctrine combining tanks, infantry and machine guns had yet to be developed. Secondly, the belief that masses of machine gun armed light tanks acting like 'a swarm of bees' could overwhelm defensive lines was misguided. Thirdly, instead, a tank like the T-26, with a three-man crew, a turret that held the gunner and commander, and a 45mm gun could be most effective if properly used.

In fact, although 330 of these machines were shipped from the USSR in the 18 months from October 1936 to March 1938, they failed to make an impact. In action they regularly suffered one-third losses, with up to half of the rest breaking down due to poor maintenance. The need to have a proper vehicle recovery system was a major lesson learnt for WW2. Fourthly, that properly used, anti-tank guns could disrupt or destroy even mass tanks attacks. The book is well-illustrated with contemporary photographs, full-colour pictures, including a two-page cutaway of the T-26, and plenty of the soon to be obsolete tankettes.

Matthew Bennett



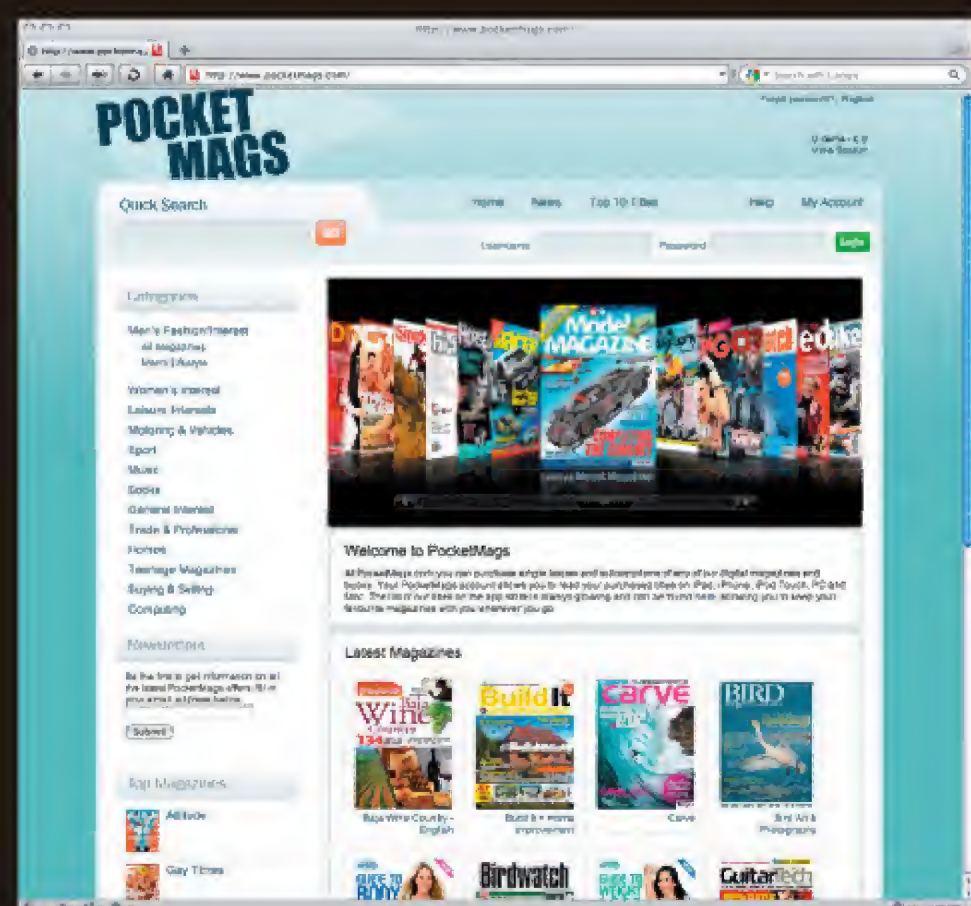
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# Book Reviews

## Turkey

by Norman Stone  
(Thames & Hudson)  
hardback, 192pp,  
£16.95



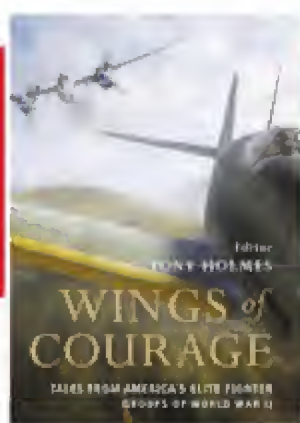
Norman Stone is one of the great historians of our time and his innovative work on the Eastern Front in the First World War is now matched by his knowledge of Turkey, where he has taught for the last decade. In this book, he gives us a brief incisive history of the country. He explains the decline of the Ottoman Empire by not blaming the impact of western Empires, the traditional left-wing viewpoint, but religious pressures within the culture that discouraged the pursuit of science, mathematics and printing. He mentions climate change too that led to the de-forestation of Anatolia and the devaluation of Turkish coinage, all leading to less wealth and power in the hands of the Sultans. Stone is very good at the material realities of history rather than imposing fashionable theories on top of the facts.

When it comes to the First World War, the British misinterpreted signs of Ottoman decline and suffered terribly at both Gallipoli and Kut. Stone puts the Armenian massacres in context—the Armenians having launched a bloody Russian-inspired revolt against the Turks—and demolishes the myth of genocide by saying the slayings were the result of several tragic unplanned incidents rather than deliberate government policy. All in all, a refreshing and sometimes surprising view of Turkish history.

Tim Newark

## Wings of Courage: Tales from America's Elite Fighter Groups of World War II

by Tony Holmes  
(Osprey) softback,  
336pp, £18.99



In 1932, America operated just four fighter squadrons; by the end of the

war there were over 200 in the USAAF! There were 500,000 applicants translating into 100,000 pilots training annually, of whom about half graduated, even though there was a demand for more, so keeping standards high. Once equipped with high quality planes such as the P-38J / L Lightning, the P-47D / Thunderbolt and the P-51B / D Mustang they proved irresistible on all fronts, whether taking on the Luftwaffe or the Japanese. The book explores the experience of these air-heroes in four differently authored chapters: two covering from D-Day to the Fall of Berlin and the other two the war in the Pacific, one devoted to the Philippines and another to the attacks on Japan.

There is plenty here to fascinate those interested in the death-or-glory lifestyle of the pilots; but this is not just a collection of war stories, rather a considered account of the vital role played by the fighter element of the Air Arm in the wider context of WW2. Ten appendices list the flyers of the four fighter groups described, with the pilots' 'kills' and their own story of sacrifice or survival. The Black aviators of 332nd Fighter Group are a particularly interesting study at a time when segregation denied many Afro-Americans a frontline fighting role. There are 20 black-and-white photographs but no maps (which would have helped).

Matthew Bennett

## Conquest

by Stewart Binns  
(Penguin), softback,  
495pp, £6.99



An exciting tale in the style of Bernard Cornwell, this historical novel begins in the tortured years of the early 11th century when Saxons and Vikings clashed over who would rule regions of Britain. Our hero is Hereward of Bourne who gets his training in the convoluted politics of the era with a venture to Scotland where, nice touch this, he meets the legendary king Macbeth. But then it is the Normans who pose the greatest danger and the story climaxes with the battle of Hastings. The result of this sets Hereward on the road to

uniting Anglo-Saxon resistance against the invaders. Excellent adventure this, which will hopefully turn into a series of books.

Tim Newark

## April UK Diary *continued*

### 21: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Professor Richard Vinen presenting a talk entitled 'Gap Years; National Service 1945-1963'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm with free entry. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### 22 and 23: Friday & Saturday

London Antique Arms Fair is being held at the Hotel Ibis, Earl's Court, 47 Lillie Road, London, SW6 1YD. Further details visit [www.antiquearmsfairsLtd.co.uk](http://www.antiquearmsfairsLtd.co.uk)

### 23: Saturday

Martells Military Vehicle Exhibition, Queen's Road, East Grinstead. Re-enactors, military vehicles and displays. Further details telephone 07967 913594.

Easter weekend off-road event organised by the IMPS at Bordon. Further details telephone 079 7092 6337.

### 23 and 24: Saturday & Sunday

Convoy for Heroes at the Heritage Motor Centre, Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warks. CV35 0BJ. Attempts at world records for most Land Rovers in convoy. Further details visit [www.convoy4heroes.org.uk](http://www.convoy4heroes.org.uk)

### 28: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Dr Erica Charters presenting a talk entitled 'Prisoners of War in the 18th Century'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm with free entry.

Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### 29, 30, 1: Friday-Sunday

North Staffordshire Military Vehicle Show at the Stafford County Showground. Displays of vehicles and re-enactment groups. Further details telephone 01782 396868 or visit [www.northstaffsmvt.co.uk](http://www.northstaffsmvt.co.uk)

### 30, 1, 2: Saturday-Monday

Military weekend at Crewe Heritage Centre. WW2 vehicles of all categories and up to modern vehicles. Further details telephone 07939 131490.

All modelling societies, war gaming clubs, re-enactment units and museums are invited to send news and details of their special events to:

John Norris, 1 Porters Hatch Close,  
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They can also be E-mailed to:  
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**1/32**  
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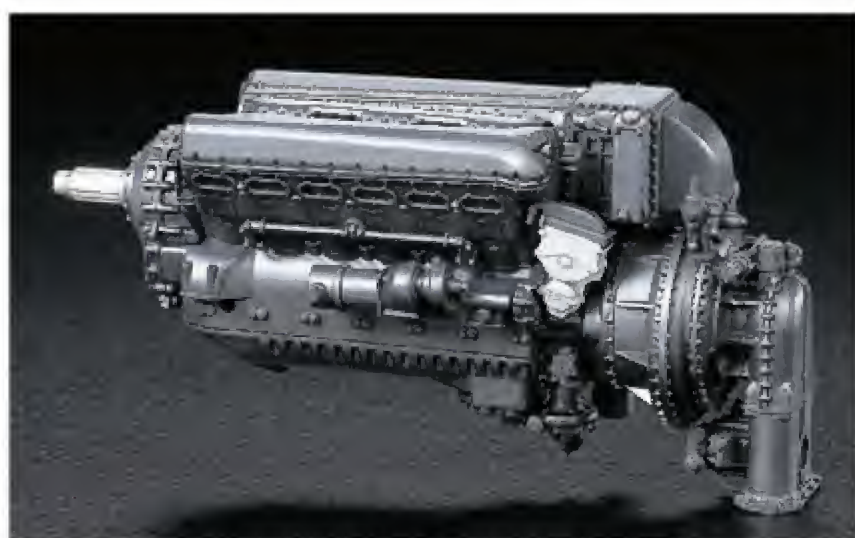
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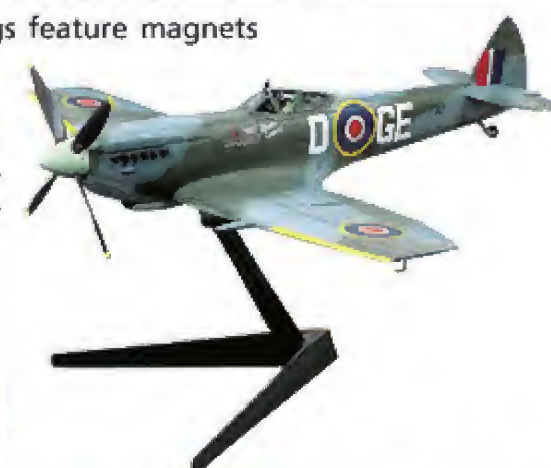


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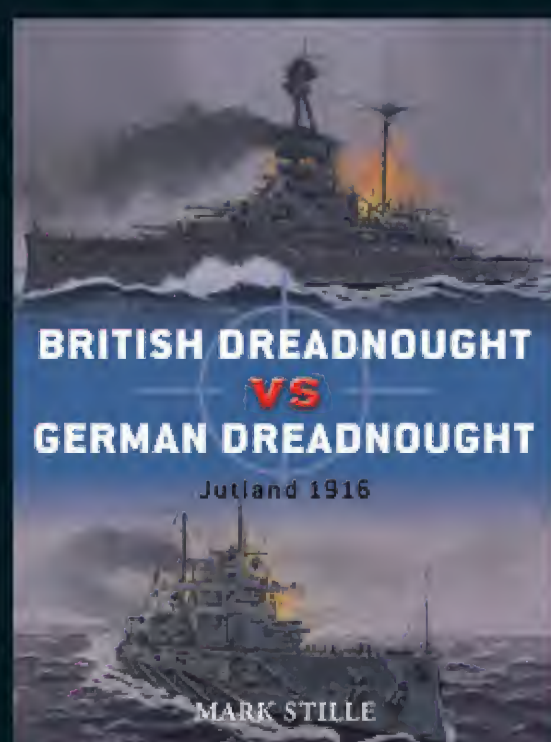
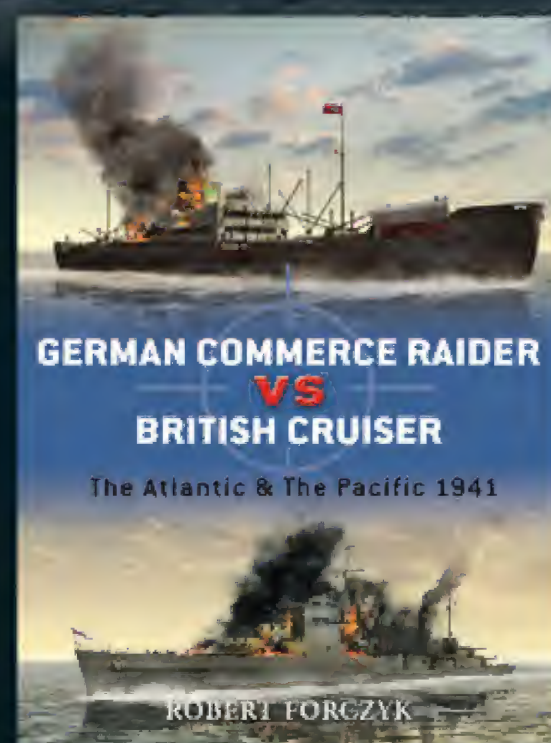
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